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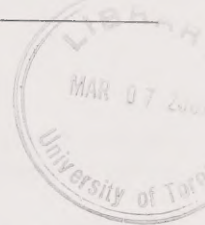
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 28 February 2005

Lundi 28 février 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 February 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 février 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JULIAN FANTINO

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is a day in the province of Ontario that I don't think we'll ever forget: the last day that Chief Fantino is chief of the Toronto Police Service.

I had the honour on Saturday night of attending the tribute dinner. It was one of the largest tribute dinners I've seen for any person, let alone anyone in a law enforcement agency, in my time in politics. There were stakeholders there from all different levels of government in Ontario and, as well, representatives from international police services.

Chief Fantino had a very, very distinguished career. I won't go into all the details of it, because time doesn't allow. Certainly his response to 9/11 here in the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto was key, and in the SARS epidemic in the spring of 2003, I know how closely he worked with Premier Eves. He also worked with Premier Eves on the blackout that hit Ontario and the city of Toronto as well. He was chief of police, of course, for York region and for the city of London Police Service as well.

I just want to say to Chief Fantino and his family that I wish them all the best. I thank him for the job he did as chief in the city of Toronto. But I want to wish him well, on behalf of John Tory and our caucus, as the new commissioner of emergency services here in the province of Ontario.

HOCKEY

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I speak today as a hockey player for over three decades, as a proud hockey parent of my eight-year-old son, Kennedy, as a trainer and assistant coach for the Toronto Aces minor atom AA GTHL hockey club, and as a proud Canadian who considers hockey to be an important part of our culture and our way of life.

At a time when the NHL is on strike, parent behaviour is under deserved and intense scrutiny, and costs for hockey are making the game inaccessible to many young Canadians, there's widespread concern that our priorities

have shifted from providing recreational and development opportunities for our youth to boardroom power plays.

There's big money in minor hockey. I know, because I have personally paid out thousands of dollars to allow my own son to play this great game. I and most parents and coaches do not mind investing our hard-earned dollars in hockey as long as we can be assured that every penny we invest is going toward a better hockey experience for our sons and daughters. Parents and players deserve the right to know if their fees are going toward hockey development and programs for our kids or into someone's pockets as profit.

In response to these concerns, the GTHL has responded with 16 recommendations that will go a long way toward making teams and clubs more accountable and transparent to the 40,000 players in the GTHL and their parents. These reforms, which I understand the GTHL will be formally considering this week, are an important step toward our collective efforts to return confidence and transparency to minor hockey in the greater Toronto area. I want to commend the GTHL for moving forward in this direction. While more reforms may be necessary, there's no question that these measures are a good first step toward lifting the cloud of controversy that has hung over the GTHL for a number of years. Perhaps the focus can now return to where it belongs: developing our young hockey players and providing them with the opportunity to enjoy Canada's national sport.

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): All members of the House are well aware of the national tragedy that saw so many Ontarians and Canadians contract hepatitis C through our blood system. Many will recall that it was former Premier Mike Harris who took steps to ensure that the Ontario government would treat all hep C victims equitably and fairly. Mr. Harris more than doubled compensation for those who contracted the virus through the blood system before January 1986 or after July 1990.

Unfortunately, the story does not end there. The Ontario government was provided with \$55 million from the federal government to assist victims who contracted hep C through the blood system before 1986 and after 1990. None of these funds have been allocated to the delivery of health care services. As a result, some people who have been disabled with hep C can no longer work

and are being forced to pay out of their own diminished income for life-saving drugs.

I am calling on the provincial government to act immediately to make sure these critical dollars begin to flow to assist these victims. This is a non-partisan issue that impacts on constituents across all of our ridings. It is in the public interest and in the interest of those innocent victims and their families. We must act now to get them the assistance they so desperately need and deserve.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Last week, I drew attention again to how the McGuinty government's strategy on domestic violence is failing to protect women from bail violators.

One of the key, long-standing recommendations made by the coroner and women's advocates is to require police, crown attorneys and JPs to use standardized risk assessments in determining bail conditions. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services concurred with me and others that such a tool in the form of the Ontario domestic assault risk assessment tool does make a difference in ensuring women's safety, and in fact can save lives. To quote the minister, "It has been tested clinically. There's no question that it works." But then he indicated that the Liberal government, despite having full knowledge of how ODARA can help to protect women from being attacked by abusive partners on bail, is not allocating the resources to put it into use throughout Ontario. Instead, it is requiring only two jurisdictions to apply this protocol on a pilot project basis.

The minister said the Liberals had to make sure that the crowns, the defence and the judiciary understand how it works, and the government has to determine how to make sure the tool is effectively implemented. Translation: The government is not allocating the resources necessary for lawyers and judges to receive the training in real time and for ODARA to be introduced throughout Ontario's justice and police systems. Cost containment is trumping women's lives. The McGuinty government must revisit their priorities. Otherwise, they are risking unnecessarily the lives of women in Ontario.

1340

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I am pleased to rise in the Legislature today to remind my fellow MPPs that this month, February, was the first ever Psychology Month. The Ontario Psychological Association's motto was, "February is Psychology Month and psychology is for everyone."

The intent of Psychology Month was to raise awareness of the role psychology plays in people's lives and in their communities. Psychologists assist Ontarians every day to meet challenges big and small. In these complex times, psychology partners with parents, people and industry to assist those in our communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those psychologists who recently donated countless hours of their time to provide counselling to the tsunami victims and their families.

Psychologists and psychological associates have been promoting psychology in schools, hospitals, clinics, workplaces and the community at large throughout the month of February. I would like all our members to find out more about the activities that took place in their ridings.

On behalf of this House, I would like to convey our appreciation to the psychology community for all of their valuable work and their dedication.

PIT BULLS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Today we will debate the third reading of Michael Bryant's pit bull legislation. Through this bill, the government has taken a real problem—vicious dogs and their attacks on people—and tried to remedy it with a short-sighted and almost universally condemned bill.

Michael Bryant's Bill 132 has been denounced by almost every group of animal experts in Ontario. The bill establishes an arbitrary definition of pit bull, one that is likely to lead to a constitutional challenge because it creates a reverse onus on dog owners.

The Attorney General could not even identify a pit bull when the media asked him to, and he expects thousands of animal control officers to be able to do so. The government has chosen to proceed despite the mountains of evidence against its flawed policy.

I offered a dangerous dog bill as an alternative and I make the offer here today. Take up the bill I introduced and pass real dangerous dog legislation into law. All members of this House have been hearing from opponents of the bill: dog owners, vets, humane societies and experts from all over the world.

Most if not all members of the opposition parties are opposing this bill. I know some of the Liberal members have expressed concerns to me about the bill. I call on Liberal members to start speaking up for their constituents and tell Michael Bryant to pull this useless and draconian bill.

TOM PATTERSON

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): It is with great sadness that I stand today to remember the life of Stratford, Ontario's, most famous citizen. Tom Patterson passed away on February 23 at the age of 84. In the early 1950s, Stratford faced significant economic fallout due to the withdrawal of the railway industry that had sustained it for almost a century.

It was journalist and World War II veteran Tom Patterson who conceived the idea of a theatre festival devoted to the works of William Shakespeare to stimulate the local economy. His vision won the support of Stratford city council, which gave him the grand sum of

\$125 to travel to New York City to secure the support of the great director Tyrone Guthrie. Working with an enthusiastic citizens' committee, the first Stratford Festival season took to the stage under the original tent in the summer of 1953.

A Companion of the Order of Canada, Tom Patterson received honours too numerous to mention. Locally, the name of Tom Patterson lives on as both the namesake of the festival's former Third Stage and the beautiful island in Lake Victoria below the Festival Theatre.

I want to extend the sympathy and gratitude of all members to both his family and the Stratford Festival community, past and present. As Ontarians, we are especially fortunate that Tom Patterson's most significant legacy, the Stratford Festival, continues to shine brightly, the jewel in the crown of Ontario and North America's contribution to the world of classical repertory theatre.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Mr. Speaker, as you and most here in the House know, farming is a way of life in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. We know that farmers across Ontario work hard. They're up at the crack of dawn and working long after sunset to provide us with the food we have on our tables. As well, they have to deal with inclement weather—sometimes a lack of moisture, sometimes too much—and the highs and lows of markets. I want to thank them for what they do for us each and every day, and I know that this House and Ontarians join me in thanking them for providing us with the safe, reliable food we have on our tables.

Farmers have always been there to feed us. Now it is time for the federal government to join us in being there for the farmers. We must ensure that we keep farming a viable way of life in this province. We will do what we can to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Simcoe North knows better than to be heckling while the member is making his statement.

Mr. Brownell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Premier McGuinty and Minister Peters have been working hard, meeting with the farm groups. We will ensure that farmers have the tools as they continue to succeed and provide us with the food we have.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to speak about the \$23-billion gap between what Ontario puts into federal coffers and what it gets back, and the effect that has on agriculture in this province. This government is committed to supporting our agricultural industry, and as a member representing some of the agricultural area in Brant, I can tell you that I try to spread this message whenever I meet Ontario's farmers and producers.

We worked to ensure that the farmers got a better deal on the agricultural policy framework with the federal government. We're spending \$47 million to provide stability for our farmers during times of crisis. We are providing up to \$30 million to help the cattle industry

cope with BSE. These are just a few of the steps we've taken to support agriculture in Ontario; we know there's still much more to be done.

Ontario's agriculture industry will face its share of challenges, as it always has. The \$23-billion gap facing Ontario isn't helping us deal with those challenges or with the other challenges that we face. The \$5.6-billion inherited deficit, an inability to properly settle and train our immigrants, being 10th out of 10 provinces in post-secondary education funding and the problems we face with agriculture are all symptoms of the \$23-billion gap. It's unfortunate that last week's federal budget did nothing to address these issues, despite the federal government's recording its eighth straight balanced budget, and even surpluses. Thanks to everyone in this House—all parties aside, because this is the engine that powers Canada's economy—a fair deal for Ontario is a fair deal for the entire country.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KITCHENER-WATERLOO Y.M.C.A. ACT, 2005

Mrs. Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr11, An Act respecting The Kitchener-Waterloo Young Men's Christian Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

1350

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The government House leader is requesting unanimous consent to put forward a motion. Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated June 17, 2004, the standing committee on general government may meet this week at the call of the Chair and that standing order 74 be waived for the purpose of any such meeting.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing

order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 1, 2005, and Wednesday, March 2, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GREENBELT

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Applause.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Thank you very much.

Interruption.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There is a working dog in the gallery and it responds this way to applause. I didn't think it would take that many times for the members of the assembly to learn that.

The Speaker: It's a good point, but I think it's a cautionary point.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It is my great pleasure to inform the House that earlier today, Premier McGuinty and I officially launched the greenbelt plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. This is the final step to ensuring a permanent greenbelt in this most densely populated area of our province, and it has come to fruition due to the strength of the Premier's vision, the commitment of our government, and the hard work of many Ontarians who have joined us in our determination to build a stronger and healthier Ontario.

As you know, the Greenbelt Act was passed by this Legislature and received royal assent last week. It gives government the authority to establish a greenbelt plan that contains broad objectives for curbing sprawl and protecting environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands across the Golden Horseshoe.

The plan released today meets these important goals and will help define this area for generations to come. The greenbelt plan sets out the boundaries of the 1.8 million acres of green space that will now be permanently protected, it defines the land use policies that will be in effect, and it sets in motion a new ability to protect the specified greenbelt area and to enable intelligent planning for the anticipated growth of the broader region.

We are all aware of the projected population numbers. By 2031, about four million more people will call Ontario home, which equals the combined population of

Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. Most of these people are expected to move to the greater Golden Horseshoe. This growth is welcome. It will attract about two million more jobs and further strengthen Ontario's economy. But we must also plan it very carefully.

Our government has taken up that challenge. The Greenbelt Act and the greenbelt plan together provide a unique opportunity to ensure that the Golden Horseshoe grows in a well-planned and thoughtful way. If passed, the Places to Grow Act and the draft growth plan for the region recently released by Minister Caplan will work in tandem with the greenbelt for the benefit of all.

Ontarians are well aware that we hold in our hands perhaps the last opportunity to really make this busy, progressive, densely populated area grow in a healthy and effective manner, and they took our invitation to be part of the process to heart. The final greenbelt plan is better for the contribution of so many people. It will clearly benefit Ontario in so many ways. Our plan will protect the environment. It will preserve agricultural lands and rural lands. It will encourage growth in existing urban areas while curbing sprawl and supporting vibrant rural communities within the greenbelt. It will provide numerous opportunities for recreational and leisure activities for a burgeoning regional population.

The greenbelt plan strikes a keen balance between meeting the needs of growing communities and protecting our green spaces. It will lead to stronger communities, to cleaner air and water, to reduced gridlock and urban sprawl, and it will help Ontarians enjoy a quality of life that is indeed second to none.

In terms of next steps, soon I will be establishing the Greenbelt Council, to make certain that as minister and as part of the government, I am kept apprised of all matters related to the greenbelt, and to which we can look for expert opinions and advice. We will review the greenbelt plan with a public review process every 10 years to ensure it is doing what it's intended to do: curbing sprawl and effectively protecting environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands.

Our objectives for a well-planned greater Golden Horseshoe are clearly ambitious, but they speak to the vision of our Premier and our government for a strong, healthy and prosperous Ontario. They speak to the desire of all Ontarians to protect our environment, our farmland, our forests and our green space. They speak to a collective desire to ensure that our children and our children's children have the same opportunity to enjoy green space that we all enjoyed while we were growing up.

The greenbelt plan released today goes beyond today, beyond our mandate. It is a vision that has become a reality, it's a reality that will become a legacy, and it will benefit the greater Golden Horseshoe, Ontario and Ontarians for generations to come.

The Speaker: Responses.

Interruption.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Obviously, it was viewed that the minister's statement was a real howler, by the response of the barking dogs in the gallery. Maybe there's whining up there as well.

I wore my green tie today, hoping I would see some good news in terms of preserving green space and today's announcement supporting farmers. But I was sadly disappointed with the minister's announcement today, which fails to address the real needs of farmers, fails to address the real needs of greenbelt municipalities and fails to produce a plan to make sure that the Greenbelt Act could truly be successful. I remain convinced that this is nothing but a "greenbotch," not a greenbelt.

In fact, it wasn't just I who was saying that. The chipmunks were back, the same two chipmunks that were there when the minister broke the campaign promise not to build any houses on the Oak Ridges moraine. Those same chipmunks were back to greet the minister at the McMichael art gallery, where he made his announcement this morning. Chipmunks are not subtle creatures. Their signs were quite blatant in what they were accusing the Premier of. To put it more subtly, they were comparing the Premier to Pinocchio, but they used that big "L" word that we're not allowed to say here in the Legislature. I want to say too that the McMichael art gallery—

The Speaker: I'd like the member to watch his language as he describes members of Parliament. It's very unparliamentary, the way you're going. I'm going to caution you on this.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're right; the chipmunks themselves were not subtle creatures.

The McMichael art gallery was a very suitable launching pad today, which proves that the initiative is far more about the art of politics and not environmental science. In fact, Dalton McGuinty had his own group of seven cabinet ministers there, complete with their staff and their limousines, for that announcement today.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The seven dwarfs.
1400

Mr. Hudak: My colleague says, "The seven dwarfs," but a group of seven nonetheless. Maybe the Premier flew to Kleinburg; I'm not exactly sure.

The seven ministers were there, trying to paint a pretty environmental picture, but beneath that canvas, I'll say again, no plan to support our farmers, no plan for viability of agriculture in the greenbelt area, no plan to address municipalities whose growth would be frozen by the greenbelt plan. If they want to invest in local services—a new rec centre, roads or sewers—they'll find their tax base frozen, resulting in significant tax increases without support for greenbelt municipalities. There was no plan announced there today, no appeal mechanism whatsoever. It remains that if you happen to know somebody, maybe in the minister's office or in the Liberal Party, you might get your chance for appeal, but nobody else will have that opportunity. There is no public transparent or science-based appeal process for people to bring their concerns forward.

Shockingly, despite requests from the opposition for weeks and weeks now, there is no public revelation of the science behind this plan. They had talked about the LEAR studies done by the Minister of Agriculture to look at the viability of the farm from its soil and the

economic circumstances, but the only LEAR study we have received is one from Ottawa-Carleton, nowhere near the greenbelt area. Obviously, these studies of which they boast are simply ghost studies. They have not brought those forward.

For folks lined up down Highway 401, which we traversed today, or the QEW or the 427, that long line of traffic, that long snake of traffic is just getting longer on this plan because there's no investment to break gridlock to help people get to work, home to their families and to their friends quicker. Gridlock, without significant investment dollars behind this plan, will just get worse.

I am pleased that the Boyd Conservation Area, Pleasant View in Dundas and the Beverly marsh are now included in the greenbelt. It's just too bad that it took a political process to do so. The opposition brought forward a motion at committee for the Boyd Conservation Area, which happens to be in the finance minister's riding, and the Liberal members voted against it at committee. So we're relieved to see today that some pristine environmental areas are included. It's a shame that it took our publicly embarrassing the government time and time again to get those areas included in the greenbelt.

I know the minister will soon set up his council. I'm pleased to hear that. I had suggested a separate one for Niagara and for the Holland Marsh. He may still do so; I hope so. But please make sure that there is strong agricultural representation. We're worried that you're going to leave them off the page.

Interruption.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I think the working dog in here today is giving my response for me: a whine here, a howl there, here a whine, there a whine, everywhere a howl. Although this greenbelt does protect some farmland and does protect some environmentally sensitive land—we all concede that, and it's important to do so—what we have here is not a permanent greenbelt as promised by the government.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): We've heard this before.

Ms. Churley: Yes, and you're going to keep on hearing it, let me tell you.

As stated by the minister before—I noticed his rhetoric, in fact, was toned down today. I don't think he's referring to it any more as the "cornerstone" and "stopping urban sprawl"; he is calling it a legacy. But the reality is that the New Democrats introduced an amendment at committee to fix what I thought was an oversight, and that is because he said—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): They voted for it.

Ms. Churley: No, they didn't vote for it. He said it was going to be permanent; it is a floating greenbelt, and even worse—yes, it is—you can remove lands and add lands as you choose. So you can have the member, say, from Stoney Creek come to you and say, "I'm getting a lot of flak in my riding about some of the lands included in it. You remove those lands and put in some land from somewhere else." We've already had some examples of

that happening, and therein lies the problem: You can remove at will and put in wherever you want at will. So this is not a permanent greenbelt at all.

The other problem, and there are several I want to bring up again today, is that this greenbelt does not include some of the prime farmland in Ontario. That farmland is left stranded between the greenbelt and the designated urban centre. It's been said, not just by me but by the Neptis Foundation—and I'm going to quote them again—what this means. Some of the best farmland in southern Ontario, as stated by the Christian Farmers and others, has been left out of the greenbelt. That band up there means that developers can buy up land in that farmland. Furthermore, south Simcoe is not included in the greenbelt. You've got highways going all over the place through the greenbelt, and you know that if you build it—the infrastructure, the big pipe, the highways—they will come.

This is what Neptis said about your greenbelt plan: "When the proposed greenbelt plan was released, the government announced that the plan would 'curb unplanned urban sprawl' by setting 'strict limits on urban boundaries.' While this might hold true within the greenbelt, the plan will do very little to curb sprawl outside the belt."

Minister, you had an opportunity to do something about that, and you chose not to. So you're going to have leapfrog development, you're going to have highways going through, you're going to have prime farmland developed all around it. Despite the plan in place, in the end the legislation allows cabinet to ultimately determine the shape of the greenbelt. So a political whim can change the greenbelt.

Mr. Baird: After a fundraiser.

Ms. Churley: Yes, after a fundraiser, and the Tories should know how that works.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can initiate a change to the plan at any time prior to the 10-year review, followed by the approval of cabinet colleagues. Talk about the fundraisers and the pressures that are now going to be on these cabinet ministers. I'm telling you, Minister, you have not done your colleagues any favours by leaving that open to those kinds of pressures.

There is no true arm's-length body established to mitigate cabinet dominance on this issue. For instance, Minister, you know the Niagara Escarpment plan has the Niagara Escarpment Commission. They assess requests to amend the Niagara Escarpment plan, followed by board approval or rejection of their recommendations.

Minister, you had the opportunity to improve this greenbelt. You could have made it permanent, and you chose not to. The question is, why? You've put your cabinet colleagues and all of your members in jeopardy because of the pressure on them to now—think of your agriculture minister sitting there. The pressures on him and on the infrastructure minister from developers, from farmers, from whomever to move some of the pieces of land in and out is, I think, not only unfair to them but

creates great jeopardy for the preservation of the greenbelt itself.

I'm really sorry that the minister didn't listen to Neptis and others to fix this greenbelt so it truly is a permanent—

The Speaker: Thank you.

There are a lot of discussions on the floor. I would ask members that if they need to talk, they can go into their respective lobbies and have their discussions, as I'm having difficulty hearing the responses and the members.

I will also at this time ask members, whenever they are addressing any concern, to direct it to the Chair.

ORAL QUESTIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): My question is to the Premier. You just can't seem to get your financial act together. For the first time since Bob Rae was in the Premier's office, Ontario now has a Premier who doesn't seem to even care about the fact that Ontario is running a deficit. Let's make no mistake about it: This is a massive broken Liberal promise. You're raising taxes after you said you wouldn't. Instead of doing more with less, the McGuinty way is to do less with more.

Premier, 20% of Ontario's doctors will retire within the next four years. So the doctor shortage problem will only get worse under a McGuinty Liberal government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. This is the first question, and I'm getting about two or three interruptions on the government side. I'd like to hear the member for Nepean–Carleton put his question, and I'd like to hear it without any distraction and disruptions.

Mr. Baird: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for getting that other member for Nepean under control.

Premier, the doctor shortage problem will only get worse under a McGuinty Liberal government. I don't think you have a plan to solve our doctor shortage problem, and I don't think you even know what that problem is. Prove me wrong. Stand in your place and tell us today how many doctors we'll need to get on-line by 2008.

1410

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'll be delighted to acquaint the member opposite once more with our plan when it comes to increasing the number of doctors available in the province of Ontario. First of all, we are increasing the number of spaces in our existing medical schools. Beyond that, we are building a brand new medical school, the first of its kind in Canada in the past 30 years. Those two efforts will increase the number of graduating doctors by some 150. Beyond that, we've taken the number of residency spaces for our international medical graduates and gone from 90 to 200, so we are fully capitalizing on the brain

gain. Beyond that, and I'll be glad to speak more about this in our supplementaries, we are bringing on-line family health teams. There's been a tremendous interest in this new concept we're putting forward.

Mr. Baird: Premier, the people of Ontario now see that not only do you not have a plan, you're not even fully aware of what the problem is. You talk about an extra 110 doctors a year through your IMG program, but in fact, even with the numbers that you talked about, Ontario will still be 4,200 to 6,200 doctors short. The bottom line is, under your stewardship this problem will go from being a bad instance to a crisis, a growing crisis.

I remind you that it was the Conservative government under Mike Harris who announced the funding for the new medical school, it was the Conservative government who increased medical school enrolment by 30% while in office and it was the Conservative government that expanded the international medical school program. Your Liberal government has done nothing new to even address this problem. Working families in Ontario now see that you're choosing big spending over balanced budgets. They are now paying a massive new health tax, after you promised not to. Premier, stand in your place and tell us just how much of this \$2.4 billion in health tax money you are spending to finally solve this doctor crisis.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: First of all, the NDP cut medical school spaces. The Conservatives, when they served in government, then waited a full four years before they decided they were going to do something on that. We went from over 60 underserved communities in the province of Ontario to over 140 on their watch. We have acted quickly. We have more than doubled the number of residency spaces that had been put in place by the Tories on their watch, when it comes to accommodating our international medical graduates. We are building a brand new medical school. Beyond that, we're establishing family health teams.

The members opposite laugh, but these are the people who are very quick to produce rubber cheques. We're actually paying for the darn medical school, not producing rubber cheques. That's the difference: Our commitment is real.

Mr. Baird: Let's look at the numbers. With all the measures that you've just recited here now, Ontario, despite all those numbers, will be short some 4,200 to 6,800 doctors by the time voters go to the polls in the next election. The Premier nods his head, but in fact those numbers are the truth.

Premier, stand in your place and tell us if you will accept a Conservative idea to address this problem. We in the Conservative Party would like to propose that you strike an all-party select committee in this Legislature to examine the doctor shortage issues with tight time frames to report back to this House. I noticed earlier today that your government established a panel to look into ergonomic issues. Will you stand in your place and accept our idea as a constructive first step to solve this problem? Will you establish a select committee on this crisis, yes or no?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can tell you that we are very optimistic when it comes to increasing the attractiveness of our jurisdiction for family doctors and specialists alike. I can tell you that we are working hard with the OMA at the present time to land a good agreement that will—in fact, the offer that's been on the table, and this is no secret, will make our family doctors the best paid in Canada and our specialists the second-best in the entire country.

Just recently, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario told us that in 2004 they issued over 2,700 licences. That is the greatest number in the past 20 years. Very interestingly enough, for the first time, more of those were issued to foreign-trained physicians than to those trained domestically. What that tells me is that this jurisdiction is very attractive to doctors in other parts of the world. We are going to build up our complement. If I could, I would wave a magic wand, but we're doing the best we can under the circumstances you left us.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Could I get the member from Nickel Belt to come to order?

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Premier, your priorities are questionable at best. You have no plan for the economy, no plan for health care, no plan for farmers and for maintaining the rural way of life.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of farmers will be at Queen's Park this Wednesday. They will say with one voice that you have no plan for farming, no plans to stand by them and see them through their most difficult times. Farmers shouldn't have to protest to get your attention. Why have you turned your back on Ontario's farmers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Obviously, I don't agree with the characterization that the Leader of the Opposition puts on our good, strong, productive working relationship with Ontario farmers.

I had the opportunity again, just last week, to meet with representatives of various farming communities. They impressed upon me, once again, how dire their circumstances are, especially when it comes to our grain and oilseed producers. They're looking at 25-year lows when it comes to their commodity prices, due to factors virtually beyond their control—due to international markets—and we're going to have to find a way to help them.

As well, when it comes to cattle and other ruminants, they are being buffeted by the border closure. I had an opportunity to meet with Ambassador Cellucci once more just last Friday and impressed upon him once again the value of opening up that border as much as we possibly can. He assured me that on March 7 we will see at least a partial opening. We have yet more work to do. I'm sure I'll be provided the opportunity shortly to acquaint the member opposite again with the other things we're doing to help our farmers.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Premier, when it comes to protecting farming as a way of life, you have failed miserably. Your first signal to Ontario about the priority the Liberal government places on farming was a 20% cut to the agriculture and food budget. Then, without consultation, you cut the municipal drainage outlet program. We all heard what happened to you then. The treatment you received from rural Ontario was enough to get you to announce some transition funding. They obviously kept the pressure on, because a few days ago your minister announced the program was to be reinstated, although with considerably less money.

Premier, it seems that your government doesn't have a plan for rural Ontario. It's just making random decisions without regard to the consequences. Why are you making uninformed, irrational decisions that later need to be fixed, rather than consulting with the industries affected? Why must farmers show massive negative reaction before you think to listen to them?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me tell you about some of the things we have been doing for and with Ontario's farmers in order to strengthen the viability of that very important enterprise that all Ontarians benefit from. We have, together with the federal government, provided some \$410 million to the industry that's been affected by the BSE crisis, as much as \$138 million coming from Ontario alone.

I had the pleasure and privilege of hosting the first annual Premiers' Agrifood Summit. Beyond that, we are doing much work arising from that and look forward to the next annual one, reporting on milestones between now and then.

We're providing \$172 million in business risk management programs for farmers. We've delivered \$20 million so far in nutrient management financial assistance to help farmers come into compliance with some of the new regulatory requirements they've got to subscribe to.

We are working very actively with Ontario farmers. They find themselves today in some trouble; there's no doubt about that. Our responsibility as a government is to work with them to find a way out of that trouble, and we're looking forward to doing that.

1420

Mr. Hardeman: Premier, your government has demonstrated sheer incompetence in listening and responding to the needs of Ontario farmers. You're more concerned with banning the trillium while farmers are trying to figure out where they're going to get the money to plant this year's crops. You have \$400 million for the Casino Windsor Hotel but not \$300 million for grains and oilseeds to help the second-largest industry in this province. I can see your government has no meaningful plan for helping our farmers.

I have a young farmer in my riding who came to me and said that he can't afford to plant this year's crop and that he will lose money if he does, the same as he did last year. If today's farmers can't make a living and turn a profit, what is going to happen to agriculture in the

future? Premier, what do you say to the young farmer who sees absolutely no positive future in farming in a Liberal Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I would want to tell him that part of the good news is that there is a Liberal government on the job that is actually committed to farming and its future in Ontario.

Just today, as a sign of our unwavering commitment to farming in Ontario, we have established a 1.8-million-acre greenbelt that will preserve farmland in perpetuity. It's interesting to note that my friends opposite voted against that legislation, and if given the opportunity, rather than save farmland, they are more than prepared to pave farmland. I think there's an interesting study in contrasts here. We are working hard to save farmland for farmers and all Ontarians, but, given the chance, they would gladly choose to pave that same farmland.

SALE OF LANDS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, this weekend people across Ontario learned about a serious potential breach of the public trust. The Toronto Star investigated a \$15.8-million land deal between York University and developer Tribute Communities. The investigation uncovered some disturbing details: First, the multi-million dollar land deal was untendered; second, the land was sold for less than half of its value; and third, the person who brokered the land deal for the university, one Joseph Sorbara, is a close business associate of the land purchaser, Tribute Communities. Premier, do you see anything wrong with this deal? If so, what are you prepared to do about it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate the question. I know that the body ultimately responsible for these kinds of transactions is the board of governors. It is my information that the board of governors is in fact reviewing this very transaction as we speak, and I look forward to the outcome of those deliberations.

Mr. Hampton: This is not just a matter for the board of governors. This is a publicly funded university. A lot of precious Ontario tax dollars go to this college and university. We want it to go to the students, not into the pockets of developers. York University, a publicly funded university, sold public land, untendered, for less than market value, and the person who brokered the deal on behalf of the university has business interests with the purchaser of the land. On the face of it, that sounds like a big conflict of interest and a potentially huge loss, not only to the public purse but the public trust. The last time I checked, you were in charge of the public purse and the public trust in Ontario. So my question to you, Premier, is, what are you prepared to do about this, since it is a matter of the public trust and the public purse?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think this is—

Interruption.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not used to that kind of heckling. I'm not quite sure what to say in response to that kind of a heckle.

Let me say that I believe this is a matter that ought to be fully considered by the board of governors, but I can tell you what we have done beyond this. We have, for the first time ever, increased the authority of the Auditor General, formerly known as the Provincial Auditor, in the province of Ontario to ensure that that individual and his or her office can now cast their net over colleges and universities, hospitals and school boards. So if for some reason the Auditor General has an interest in this matter, he is now empowered to act on that.

Mr. Hampton: As the Premier knows, in these kinds of issues the Provincial Auditor awaits a signal from us. So I have prepared a letter, and I'm going to sign it—and I want to know, Premier, if you and the Minister of Finance are prepared to sign it—to ask the Provincial Auditor to conduct an investigation. The issue here, as I say, is not just for the university. This was public land sold by a public institution that receives taxpayers' money. The land was sold at less than half its commercial value. The deal was brokered by one Joseph Sorbara on behalf of the university, in spite of the fact that he has a business relationship with the purchaser who got the land on the cheap.

Somebody over there must be interested in protecting the public purse and the public trust. I want to know, Premier, are you interested? Will you sign on the dotted line and ask the Provincial Auditor to investigate this shady land deal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As I understand the story, none of the facts are a surprise to those involved in the transaction. People knew what they were doing. My advice to the member opposite is to allow the board of governors to review the transaction, as they are doing at present.

It is true that we gave the auditor new authority, and if the member opposite wishes to send a letter to the Auditor General advising him that he ought to be inquiring into this further, then of course he is more than free to do so.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, this is what someone said very recently: "We will allow the Auditor General to shine a light on organizations that spend taxpayer dollars, ensuring that Ontarians are getting value for the money they invest in public services." This was the now Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, on November 22, 2004.

I'm simply saying to you, on the record, that on the face of it, this land deal looks like a breach of public trust, it looks like a breach of the public purse, it looks like public lands were sold at far below their market value in a sweetheart deal to somebody who was connected with the principal person acting on behalf of the university. I'm simply asking, are you prepared to sign on the dotted line to ask the Provincial Auditor to look at this deal? You and your Minister of Finance seemed to be in support of having the Provincial Auditor look at these things only three or four months ago. Will you now sign on the dotted line asking the Provincial Auditor to do just that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, Speaker, I leave it to the member opposite. If he feels particularly strongly about this issue, if he has lost all confidence in the board of governors of York University, then by all means he should send a letter to the Provincial Auditor making whatever request to that individual he feels is appropriate.

Mr. Hampton: I have another quote: "The Harris-Eves government hides half of the budget from the Provincial Auditor. They deny him access to the province's balance sheet when it comes to spending by hospitals, universities, school boards...." and then, "We will give the auditor the power to scrutinize them all so that you know whether your dollars are being well spent." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty during the 2003 election.

So I'm asking you here today: Potentially, Premier, this land heist makes Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid look like a bunch of amateurs. Are you or are you not prepared to sign on the dotted line, along with your finance minister, Greg Sorbara, and ask the Provincial Auditor to conduct an investigation of this potential breach of the public trust and the public purse? Yes or no, Premier?

1430

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As usual, the NDP wants to take it a step too far. They not only want to ensure that the Provincial Auditor, now the Auditor General, has full authority to conduct audits of colleges, universities, hospitals and school boards, but more than that, they want us now, apparently on an individual basis, to be very selective, in terms of those things that suit our particular passing fancy, of where they're going to conduct an audit. I have greater confidence in the Auditor General than does the member opposite. I say again, we were more than glad to expand the ambit of his authority. If he has a particular interest in this matter, then I would recommend to him that he send a letter requesting of the Provincial Auditor himself that he perform some kind of whatever.

Mr. Hampton: I wonder what happened to Dalton McGuinty. I remember, when a Conservative government was doing so-called land deals, Dalton McGuinty was asking not only for forensic audits; he was asking for criminal investigations. This is clearly the public trust: a public university with lands that were donated by the public to be used, hopefully, for education, not to line the pockets of a developer. The person who negotiated the deal, Joseph Sorbara, acting on behalf of the university, also acts with the land buyer—a conflict of interest. The land was sold for much less than its market value. Again, it looks possibly like a breach of the public purse, a breach of the public trust.

Premier, when you were in opposition, you said that deals that smelled like this ought to be investigated. You said that you would facilitate the Provincial Auditor looking at this. I've given you a letter—a letter I'm asking you and Greg Sorbara to sign—to ask the Provincial Auditor to investigate. Will you do the right thing and sign the letter?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Well, I can understand the member's interest in this, but I can tell you that we have a tremendous amount of confidence in the board of governors at York University. They have decided to review this matter. I think that is appropriate, given the circumstances, and I look forward to the outcome of their deliberations.

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question for the Premier: In Bill 135, which you had a record-speed proclamation of on Thursday, you've given extraordinary powers to the Minister of Municipal Affairs when it comes to protected countryside and farmland. Clause 6(2)(a) says, "Policies prohibiting any use of land or the erection, location and use of buildings or structures for, or except for, such purposes as may be set out" for the act.

That's why farmers in the greenbelt are concerned, because of the extraordinary powers and new regulatory burden you're bringing down on greenbelt farmers. Shamefully, you characterize any concerns farmers have as them simply being speculators: They want to sell their land. Farmers we talk to want to ensure that they continue to farm viably and can pass off their land to the next generation. But in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, that's getting harder and harder to do. Premier, you shouldn't be in the business of regulating barns in Durham or grape processing facilities in Grimsby. Tell us today that you're not bringing in any more interference on farms through your greenbelt legislation, none whatsoever.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'm pleased that the member has asked this question, because today is certainly a great day for Ontario, with the legacy legislation that has been passed and the greenbelt plan that has been put into operation. We have made sure that a million more acres of land are protected environmental and agricultural uses.

Specifically, with respect to the member's question, let me say just this: All existing farming uses that are currently in operation will continue. Not only that, there are policies in place to make sure that new technological advances in agriculture can be handled and dealt with on the lands that are agriculturally zoned within the greenbelt area. We want to make sure farmland is protected so that farmers can continue to produce the produce that is so much required for this part of Ontario. We are very proud of this legislation, and I know, in time to come, the few people that don't like the legislation will come to appreciate as well what we've done for generations to come.

Mr. Hudak: I know that the minister is of the opinion that he is a lot smarter than farmers in the greenbelt area,

but there are ongoing concerns about your plans for farmers in the greenbelt. You say that it won't interfere with existing structures. Well, you gave yourself an extraordinary ability to do so in your legislation. Your own advisory team tells you, for example, to limit on-farm businesses to no more than 1,600 square feet in size and to no more than 4,500 person-hours. That's less than two employees at the on-farm business.

If you limit it to 1,600 square feet, that means a Henry of Pelham, a Harbour Estates Winery, any of the wineries that exist today, which help to support agriculture, would not be allowed under your greenbelt legislation and this advice.

Please tell me today that you're going to scrap this plan, that you're not going to limit the buildings on farms; as your own team is telling you to do.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I know the Minister of Agriculture would like to answer this part of the question.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We're very proud of the work that the agricultural advisory team did. Lyle Vanclicf and Bob Bedggood brought forth a number of good initiatives that we're working on to implement. For example, there was concern in the greenbelt area about surplus dwellings and the ability to sever those surplus dwellings. We're moving forward to give those farmers that ability to sever off surplus dwellings.

We're working with the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board to ensure that we enhance the ability of the agricultural community to continue to operate viably. We're moving forward with the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'm going to have to warn you, member for Durham, about the continuous heckling.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Peters: It's really unfortunate that the member for Durham isn't standing up and making sure that he's there supporting his farmers. He's certainly not doing that at all.

As well, we're moving forward. The previous government had two minimum-distance-separation formulas in place. It was very confusing for the agricultural community. We're strengthening that. We're going to have one MDS formula. We're moving forward and we're implementing some of these recommendations. Others are in the process of being—

The Speaker: New question.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): To the Premier: Your own minister's staff, as well as the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment—as you know, it's a highly renowned group with immense expertise in protecting natural areas in Ontario—has stated that the greenbelt is not permanent.

Again today, with the announcement of the final greenbelt plan, you have done nothing to address the floating nature of the greenbelt boundaries. This means that boundaries can be shifted around at the whim of the minister or the cabinet of the day.

Premier, on this day, the day that you've announced the greenbelt plan, will you immediately keep your promise and now ground the floating greenbelt, and give Ontarians the permanent greenbelt that you promised?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me begin by thanking the member opposite for her support for this bill, this plan and this greenbelt.

This is a very ambitious vision that we have breathed life into today. In fact, we committed to putting in place protection for 600,000 acres; we've exceeded that and we've protected one million new acres as a result of the efforts of this minister. We are very proud of the efforts he's made on behalf of this government and generations yet to come.

Beyond that, as we moved through a period of time after we first introduced the draft plan, we have added another 8,500 acres beyond the original plan that we had in place as a draft. So we're very proud of the ambition, the breadth, the scope and the depth of this particular plan. Once again, I thank the member opposite for her support for this greenbelt.

Ms. Churley: Premier, instead of protecting south Simcoe lands and curbing urban sprawl, as you promised, your recent draft Places to Grow plan reveals the greenbelt as a beltway for new highways, including a major highway between Kitchener-Waterloo and Brampton, and an extension of Highway 404 north to Ravenshoe Road at Keswick, fuelling sprawl all the way to Lake Simcoe. You know that if you build it, they will come, that this plan will not in fact curb urban sprawl; it will increase it. Premier, will you stand against urban sprawl today and cancel those major highways and major highway extensions through the greenbelt?

1440

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think we've got it just right. The Tories, of course, voted against this bill, which tells me that if given the chance, they would gladly eliminate the greenbelt—there's no doubt about that whatsoever—and pave over every square inch of farmland. We'll do our best to make sure that doesn't happen.

The MPPs supported the bill, but now I hear that it doesn't go far enough. Well, you cannot possibly put this forward in good conscience with any element of reasonableness if we say that we're somehow going to put a greenbelt that circumscribes the greater Golden Horseshoe and there will be no roads connecting the inside to the outside. That would simply be unreasonable.

What we have in place is something that is nothing less than visionary. It was said by many that it could not be done. We have managed, for generations yet to come, to stand up for their unspoken voices and to protect in perpetuity 1.8 million acres, and we're very proud of that.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Rural infrastructure is a very important issue in my

riding. In particular, farmers need good drainage systems to ensure the viability of their agriculture operations. Minister, as you may remember, in the summer of 2004 the municipal outlet drainage program was suspended. Shortly after, I held a public meeting in my riding in the village of Maxville, where farmers from the seven greater eastern Ontario counties and rural municipalities expressed their concerns on this matter.

Minister, last week at ROMA you announced a new agricultural drainage infrastructure program. How will this new program work, and how is it different from the old program?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It is a new program, and it's a better program because we're going to ensure that the dollars are targeted to where they need to be, and that is assisting agricultural landowners not only to build new drainage systems but, as well, to maintain those drainage systems. These are dollars that are going to be focused. We're not going to allow them to be eaten up in all kinds of other costs.

I want to thank members of the rural caucus, because their criticisms can be levelled, but we do listen. We heard from our rural members that we needed to bring back a new program, but a program that was going to do what it was intended to do in the first place. The Tories lost sight of that. They just let a program run rampant, without any good oversight. What we're going to do is make sure there is oversight in that program.

I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank my parliamentary assistant, the member for Huron-Bruce, for her hard work on this program.

Mr. Lalonde: Thank you, Minister. I am delighted to learn that our government has listened to the concerns of rural Ontario and has responded with a real commitment to enhance drainage infrastructure in our province. Will you please explain what else our government is doing to support the agricultural sector in rural Ontario at the present time.

Hon. Mr. Peters: We're certainly not going to do what the Conservatives did. They cut over \$100 million from the budget between 1996 and 1999. We're not going to close offices; we're going to make sure that we're investing in programs. We're moving forward. We're investing in research. We're working very collaboratively with the University of Guelph: over \$40 million a year in research.

We're investing in slaughter capacity in this province. One of the things the BSE case has taught us is that there's a severe shortage of slaughter capacity. We're going to have a slaughter capacity of over 6,500 additional animals a month.

We've moved forward on the RST exemption for farmers to use their farm cards, something that the Tories ignored.

We've moved forward on family-to-family land transfer sales, to take away that land transfer tax, something the previous government ignored. We're moving forward on it.

We've invested in a number of areas. We're making strategic investments that are going to move for long-

term viability. That's why we hosted the Premier's agricultural summit. We have short-term issues, but this Premier is a man of vision. He believes we need to look forward, and that's what we're going to do with the agriculture and the agri-food industry in this province.

SALE OF LANDS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is to the Premier as well. Recently, your government froze the value and changed the value of millions of acres for people living around the greater Toronto area. We have heard today of a tremendous concern—and the Treasurer says to us—about speculation, and that's my question to the Premier. Mr. Premier, you have the power to freeze the zoning in any part of Ontario. Will you use that power on the York University lands that were recently conveyed to a developer?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): No.

Mr. Sterling: Would you not think, Mr. Premier, while this cloud of investigations goes on, that it would be in the best interests of the public that this land not be further developed than it is today, that the public have the confidence that York University has received full value for this property? You and your cabinet have the tools to freeze the zoning on that land this afternoon so that we can ensure that the land will be used, in the future, for the good of York University and not for the good of some development company.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Maybe to shed a little bit more light on this and the position being taken by York University, here's a letter I received today from the president and vice-chancellor, Lorna Marsden, and I'll quote from that in part. She says:

"We emphatically reject the thrust of these articles"—making reference to the Star articles—"and believe that we have followed all the appropriate steps in approving the land developments, which have been in the planning for more than eight years.

"Because the leader of the NDP is quoted in Sunday's Star, I want you to know that we are happy to have a review of this matter by an outside and independent person. We will be tabling this suggestion to our board of governors at our meeting today. If our board decides to proceed, I will keep you fully informed of the terms of reference, and of the outside reviewer."

I think we should give the board an opportunity to consider this matter.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, you know that today is the sixth annual Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. You also know, because it's WSIB data that tell us, that over half of workplace injuries are from various forms of repetitive strain injuries.

Today you announced an advisory panel—we understand that—but you know that workers across this province and their advocates have been unequivocal in their call for ergonomic regulations like those in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Some workers are here today. Will you please stand up and tell them that ergonomic regulations will be an essential part, an inevitable part, of your response to this crisis?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I would like to thank the member for the question, and I'd like to thank those who have come today to make sure that everybody understands the terrible toll that ergonomic injuries, repetitive strain injuries, take on workers in this province. It is an enormous toll: 40,000 musculoskeletal lost-time injuries every year.

During the Minister's Health and Safety Action Groups last year that brought business and labour together, it was apparent that this was a very significant issue, and there were calls for action. What I committed to do was to form an advisory panel, which will be chaired by my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Oakville, Kevin Flynn, and which has business and labour representatives on it. They have their first meeting on March 7, and we spent a couple of months putting together the membership. What I've asked them to do is to take a look at an overarching strategy, including consideration of regulation, the possibility of regulation and what that might look like, to make sure we have an overarching strategy to reduce workplace ergonomic injuries in all workplaces in the province. I look forward after six months to their recommendations.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, workers in Ontario have witnessed consultations before, and injured workers have endured even more of them, but they know that at the end of the day it is action and not talk that's going to deal with repetitive strain injury.

Both British Columbia and Saskatchewan have acted. The template is there for you. These are ergonomic regulations that protect workers from these incredible injuries, these disastrous injuries. These are regulations that help stem this epidemic of repetitive strain injury in the workplace.

1450

What these workers want to hear you say—and I understand you're having a panel engage in consultations. Will you please—you've read the regulations from Saskatchewan and British Columbia—tell these workers today that similar ergonomic regulations will be a part of your response, notwithstanding anything else that panel may come back to you with?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Thank you again. In fact, the regulations in different jurisdictions are different, and one of the things is that if regulation is to be part of the response, we need to know what that regulation will look like and how detailed it is. We of course have a general regulation in the province of Ontario for employers, a general duty. That may well not be enough, but we need to know, if we're going to regulate, what it looks like.

In addition, I'm looking forward to the recommendations of groups such as the CAW, the United

Steelworkers, the IAPA, the Federation of Labour, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association and the Business Council on Occupational Health and Safety.

But in addition, it is important to know what we've already done. The Minister of Health has already announced \$74 million in funding for bed lifts for our health care facilities. That assists with respect to the lifting of patients. We've now hired 125 more inspectors to make sure that we can inspect workplaces where we didn't used to get to, to ensure that the regulations we have are being properly enforced. The WSIB is funding a research project on this very issue, ergonomic injuries, and there's a strategy being developed—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, Ontarians are fiercely proud Canadians. We're proud to be the heart of Canada, the province that helps fund programs like health care and higher education in seven other provinces and three territories. But our ability to make important investments in our people and their prosperity is compromised by the \$23-billion gap. This is a \$23-billion gap between what the federal government collects in revenue from Ontarians and what it returns to us in spending.

On Friday, the federal finance minister recognized some of Ontario's concerns, like immigration. However, I did notice that he stated that Ontario benefits from the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer, which support things like health care and post-secondary education. Minister, how is Ontario affected by these transfers?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Thank you to my friend from the county. Obviously, Ontario benefits from these transfers, but the point that we've been trying to make is that systems for distributing the assets across the country are significantly out of whack. If I could just provide you with one example: Under the CHT, the Canada health transfer, and the Canada social transfer, what comes to Ontario on a per capita basis is \$608 under these grants. But the per capita amount for the rest of the country is \$667. That's a difference of about \$60 a person. When you add it all up, it costs this province about \$1 million a year in transfers that don't come to our people, our hospitals, our universities or our schools.

Mr. Parsons: Minister, one of the most obvious problems is in immigration. Investment in immigration settlements means new Canadians can start contributing to Canada quickly and use their skills to better themselves, our province and our country. In Ontario, the federal government provides just \$800 to help settle a new Canadian. In Quebec, they invest \$3,800. Minister, on Friday the federal finance minister agreed that

Ontario's concerns about this gap are valid. How will this small victory help to close the overall \$23-billion gap?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: If I might just correct the record in my first answer, some of my colleagues say I said the difference was \$1 million; it's actually \$1 billion in the per capita transfer.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Runciman knew that; there's no doubt about that.

On the immigration matter, the first thing is, I want to put on the record that this government and I personally have a strong relationship with Finance Minister Ralph Goodale. Our two governments work well together. I want to say to you that he does have an understanding of the fact that Ontario needs an immigration agreement that will help us to settle immigrants in this country at a very high standard of settlement. That's why I'm sure that Finance Minister Goodale is going to be a strong voice in the federal cabinet to make sure that Ontario has an immigration agreement and that it has an immigration agreement very quickly indeed.

PIT BULLS

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): My question is for the Premier. Instead of dealing with the real priorities of Ontarians—eliminating the doctor shortage, reducing wait times and providing proper hospital funding—your government is calling the fatally flawed Bill 132, the dog statute amendment act, or pit bull ban, for third reading today. You were told at the public hearings that the day after Bill 132 passes on March 1, the public will be no safer from vicious dog attacks because there will be not one fewer pit bull or vicious dog on the street but there will be more victims of pit bull and vicious dog attacks.

My question to the Premier: Why should the public have confidence in an Attorney General who fails to understand that safety from vicious dogs matters to them? You have done nothing in Bill 132 to protect them from vicious dog attacks. What will you say to victims of vicious dog attacks after March 1 when Bill 132 fails to protect them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): There has been an enormous amount of public consultation on this bill, and it is coming forward for further debate again today. I think this bill probably got more days of public hearings, more days of debate in the Legislature and more consultation than any other bill on the subject of dogs in the history of the Commonwealth, and it has benefited from that.

If the Legislature votes in favour of this bill, mark my words, this bill will save lives and save injuries and, over time, it will mean fewer pit bull attacks and, overall, fewer attacks by dangerous dogs. That's good news for public safety in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Tascona: Bill 132 contains no measures to address the two major problems involving vicious dog attacks and public safety: (1) a lack of enforcement, and you are on record saying there'll be no money for municipalities to better enforce, and (2) no measures to make irresponsible dog owners more responsible. You are betraying the public trust in proceeding with Bill 132, which, as you know from the experts in the public hearings, will not protect the public from vicious dog attacks now.

Attorney General, it seems that Bill 132 is simply a shameless exercise to promote your image. Why haven't you listened to the public and proposed legislation that will effectively protect the public from vicious dogs and allow people to feel safe while walking on our streets?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The people of Ontario said they wanted legislation in place that would protect them from dangerous dogs, and we've done that with this bill. The people have said that they don't want to continue to walk the streets, parks, farms and living rooms of Ontario and be attacked by pit bulls, and we're on their side. We want to bring that public safety.

But what they would like to know is, I say to the Conservatives, what side are you on? Back on September 20, 2004, when asked about the Liberal pit bull plan, here's what John Tory said: "I think there is a real issue there.... But I think—I've read enough to believe, you know, there's enough evidence about this particular breed of dogs that probably this is a wise thing to do." Then in November he said, "I was certainly never gung-ho. From day one I have said this is what it is...."

Well, this government is not going to roll over on public safety, even if John Tory will. We look forward to seeing how they're going to vote this week on this bill.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Ontario farmers are in desperate straits. The BSE crisis has decimated the beef industry and is also affecting farm income in the dairy industry. Crop farmers are facing 25-year lows for oilseeds and require an immediate infusion of \$300 million just to be able to put crop in the ground this spring. Michigan farmers are dumping subsidized corn in the Ontario market well below the production costs of Ontario corn farmers.

Premier, Ontario farmers need a comprehensive agricultural plan that returns their costs of production. Quebec farmers have such a plan. American farmers have such a plan. Where is the McGuinty government's plan for Ontario farmers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

1500

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It's wonderful to see all this interest in agriculture from

the other side, with all the silence that we've had over the past two weeks.

We're moving forward on a number of fronts. We've signed the agricultural policy framework, which has put in place the new CAIS program. The CAIS program will flow more than \$190 million in support to farmers in this province. We've moved forward with the wedge funding: \$172 million in support for farmers in this province. We've moved forward on the 2003-04 payouts to the old market revenue insurance program, which will flow more than \$94 million to grains and oilseeds farmers. We're moving forward on a renewable fuels strategy because, ultimately, that's what we have to do. We have to deal with things and commodities in our own backyard and need to add value. That's why we're moving forward to make sure that we're going to have a program in place that encourages domestic consumption and that encourages domestic production. We're going to move forward as well on a biodiesel strategy. We're going to move forward to make sure that our farmers are competitive.

Mr. Hampton: Farmers in Ontario have heard all that. They've heard all that over and over again. Here's the reality for corn farmers: In Ontario, they get \$26 an acre for their corn crop. Meanwhile, next door in Michigan, they get \$126 an acre for their corn crop. Farmers are wondering what it will take before you notice them.

Now, farmers haven't missed the fact that the McGuinty government has announced a \$500-million investment strategy for the auto sector, that you've announced a \$100-million investment strategy for the movie and television production industry in Toronto. They haven't missed that you've announced a \$400-million investment strategy for the Windsor casino. What they are asking is, where's the investment strategy for Ontario farmers? That's what they want to know: Where's the investment strategy for them?

Hon. Mr. Peters: That investment strategy was signed in December 2003, when we signed the agricultural policy framework, which will bring \$1.7 billion in support for Ontario farmers over the next five years. As well, the Premier had the opportunity to meet with farm leaders last week, and he made the commitment to them that we're going to undertake a comprehensive review of the safety net programs that we have in this province, to look at not only a short-term but a long-term strategy.

The member makes reference to the ASRA program. I think what he needs to understand is that when his party was in government, they didn't introduce an ASRA program. When the Tories were in government, they didn't introduce an ASRA program.

We're going to continue to work with farmers. We're going to continue to advocate to the federal government, because you need to understand that this drop in commodity prices is not a result of provincial government policies. This is a national problem that requires a national strategy. When we meet as federal-provincial ministers this week, that's the message that I'm going to

take from Ontario. We need to make sure the federal government recognizes the plight of Ontario farmers.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. This past Friday our government announced new funding under the women in skilled trades initiative. In my riding of Guelph-Wellington, this funding will enable women to receive pre-apprenticeship training in general carpentry at Conestoga College. I've always been a strong advocate for women in non-traditional roles, so I'm very pleased that our government has made this opportunity available for training in Guelph. Our area is experiencing a major building boom, and women who graduate from the WIST program will be able to pick up great jobs with local building contractors. Minister, can you please tell the House who will benefit from this initiative?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. She indeed is a role model for women in non-traditional roles herself. Just being in this House makes you a great role model.

Let me say that this program, which was announced, once again, this past Friday, is a tremendous program for low-income women as well as new Canadians. It targets women who have difficulty in terms of finding work placement. It provides in-school training and placement with employers. There are several other places across Ontario that are benefiting: Georgian College in Barrie, with the general carpentry program; new homes service technician and general carpentry in Burlington; welding in Hawkesbury; native residential construction at Northern College in Moosonee; and the industrial electrician program at Algonquin College in Ottawa. Congratulations to all of those campuses for participating.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Minister, on Friday our government also announced new funding to help unemployed and low-income women in Toronto train for good jobs in the information technology field through its information technology training program for women. In my riding of Etobicoke North, the Community MicroSkills Development Centre has received over \$1.3 million to continue their good work preparing women in my riding for challenging technical careers. Many of those who enrol in this program face unique hurdles, particularly new Canadians who often require a variety of social support mechanisms to help them adjust to their new cultural and economic environments. Can you please tell the House how this program will help these women contribute to and succeed in Ontario's workplace?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: This member opposite has a very good grasp of this program, and people in his riding will certainly benefit, as well as people across Ontario.

This particular program is for women only, and it does address issues for new Canadians who are new to what Canadian workplaces demand, so it not only teaches the technical nature of the program but also the expectations of work here in Ontario. It has been extremely successful in the past, and we hope that this year will be no different. The best part about this program, which is funded through the Ontario Women's Directorate, is that the success rate for finding jobs for these graduates is 75%. Congratulations.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. The cry of anger being heard from rural Ontario and the farmers of this province is growing louder by the day. A year ago, you announced transition funding for a new generation of safety nets, which included bridge funding for the market revenue insurance program. At that time, you recognized the problem in the industry and promised that money would flow. Then you announced the same bridge funding for the market revenue insurance program on December 7, 2004, saying how important it was that farmers get the money. At the end of year, you reannounced the reannouncement of the market revenue program in your year-end announcement. Then three days ago, guess what? You reannounced the reannouncement of the reannouncement of the same money for the market revenue bridge program.

Minister, are you prepared to provide the \$300 million that grain and oilseed farmers say are going to be required in order for them to even plant the crop this spring, without further reannouncement and in time so they can plant the crop to have a decent season?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): As the honourable member should know, when the agricultural policy framework was signed, there were a number of companion programs that were going to be phased out. Two of those companion programs were the market revenue insurance program for the grain and oilseeds sector and the self-directed risk management program for the horticultural fruit and vegetable sector.

I asked that a report be completed as to where we go post-MRI. Where do we go post-SDRM? Those reports have been completed. I just met with the horticultural and vegetable sector this morning to go over their post-SDRM report, because we are looking ahead.

The other thing that I certainly would encourage the honourable member to do is that the federal government said that they are no longer funding companion programs. I would encourage him to advocate to his Tory colleague in his own riding that the federal government should be providing their traditional 60% share of safety net programs. We've had that long-standing relationship of 60-40 funding. The federal government is absent when it comes to 60% funding for—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: Thank you very much, Minister, and I think that's really what my whole question was based on. You continually just keep spouting the same talk but sending absolutely no money to the farmers. Farmers are telling me they can no longer make a living, and their input costs are far surpassing what they're getting for their product. It seems to them that this government just doesn't care. The prices have dropped in the grain and oilseed sector, and you're doing absolutely nothing to help these farmers.

Ontario's farmers are suffering because European and American governments realize the importance of agriculture and helping their farmers. Minister, what are you going to do to level the playing field, get the money out to the farmers and get all this money that you promised them but are not delivering? Farmers are still waiting for their CAIS money from 2003, Minister. You heard it at the ROMA conference. They stood at the mike and said, "Minister, please send us the money"—

The Speaker: Thank you.

1510

Hon. Mr. Peters: The dollars are going to flow. We committed \$94 million from the remaining market revenue fund. The 2003 payment is about \$8 million; the balance is going to grain and oilseed producers for the 2004 crop year. We're continuing our discussions with the grain and oilseed leaders not only to develop a strategy for Ontario but how we can take a strategy forward to the federal government.

He hit the nail on the head, Mr. Speaker. He talked about the European government and United States government. That's the challenge we're facing in Ontario. Those are national programs. We need national leadership. We need national recognition of the hurt that the grain and oilseed sector is facing, and that's the message we're going to take forward.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I want to inform the members that we have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the foreign affairs office of Jiangsu province, China. Please join in warmly welcoming our guests.

PETITIONS

PIT BULLS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I appreciate the Speaker in the Chair is one I'm particularly pleased to work with.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned," respectfully "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds," similar to the legislation from the member, Julia Munro.

I support Julia's bill. I don't support—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I have the following petition, signed by 981 people:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name to this petition and hand it to Kristine.

PIT BULLS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly, and it reads:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

I affix my name in support.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Minister of Labour and the provincial Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas repetitive strain injuries, back injuries and musculoskeletal injuries are of epidemic proportions and are on the rise at an alarming rate affecting workers in all sectors; and

"Whereas the human cost and suffering to workers and loved ones is incalculable; and

"Whereas there have been many workplace ergonomic studies that have provided evidence that applied ergonomics and early intervention could prevent such injuries if regulations and standards for the workplace were established; and

"Whereas British Columbia and Saskatchewan have provincial ergonomic regulations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Labour, the provincial Legislative Assembly and Parliament as follows:

"That the Minister of Labour introduce ergonomics regulations similar to the British Columbia ergonomic regulation and draft code of practice, to protect the workers of this province and Canada."

I've signed it, along with thousands upon thousands of others, and deliver it to the Clerks' table now.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to standardize and enforce up-to-date policies and procedures in all Ontario Catholic and public school boards for all students with allergies and for anaphylaxis; and

"Whereas the Toronto public and Catholic district school boards have had recent changes made to their policies for such cases, and were revised in June of 2003;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all school boards in Ontario initiate and enforce up-to-date and standardized policies and procedures and guidelines for children with allergies and anaphylactic reactions;

"That all school boards in Ontario also standardize the food products used for fundraising projects, and all parents with children at risk be made aware of any potential items or products used for any purpose of fundraising or in-class projects or field trips;

"We hope that immediate action will be taken in this matter, and we thank you on behalf of our daughter and look forward to hearing from the Legislative Assembly of Ontario soon."

I also sign this petition.

PIT BULLS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

Julia Munro, our member, has brought in a bill to that effect. I support this petition and her bill.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

It's signed by thousands and by myself as well. Page Ian is delivering these to the Clerk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Davenport.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much.

I have a petition here to the Parliament of Ontario and to the minister responsible for seniors. It reads as follows:

"Whereas most seniors live on fixed incomes which are eroding every year due to inflation costs and other necessary expenses"—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Especially if they voted NDP.

Mr. Ruprecht: I don't know why this member disagrees with this, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Please read from the petition.

Mr. Ruprecht: —but I'm telling you that every year—

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member for Davenport—

Interjection.

1520

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Davenport. We'll move on.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

I have signed this also, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Attorney General won't put his hands over his face on this one.

SENIORS' TRANSIT PASS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll try again. The member for Davenport.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that you said that, because I didn't want to be interrupted.

The Deputy Speaker: Just read from the petition, please.

Mr. Ruprecht: The petition is to the Parliament of Ontario and to the minister responsible for seniors, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas most seniors live on fixed incomes which are eroding every year due to inflation costs and other necessary expenses;

"Whereas most seniors have their freedom severely restricted when unable to go about their daily business, which includes public transit;

"Whereas most seniors should be encouraged to live active, healthy lives—visiting friends, relatives, going shopping etc.;

"Whereas other jurisdictions already provide free local transit passes to seniors, namely, many cities in the USA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and responsible for seniors to ensure that seniors be granted a free TTC pass, and/or introduce legislation that will force the local Toronto Transit Commission to issue free TTC passes."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

PIT BULLS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present over 5,600 signatures and about 440 petitions. I want to commend Sandra Alway from the Golden Horseshoe American Pit Bull Terrier Club, among others.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just read from the petition, please.

Mr. Hudak: You bet, Mr. Speaker. It reads as follows:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

In support, my signature.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) provides poor service to the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(a) Direct the MPAC to improve their customer service;

"(b) Reduce the property tax for people on fixed incomes, such as senior citizens and people on disability;

"(c) Abolish the current market value assessment tax and return to the former tax assessment system."

I also signed this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live” in the province.

I’m pleased to sign my name to this.

PIT BULLS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I also have petitions against breed-specific legislation, thanks to people like Sandra Alway.

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

“Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

“The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds.”

I support this, and I sign it.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the foreign export production industry in Ontario has been badly hit by the recent economic events

that have transpired here over the course of the past 18 months;

“Whereas we are in desperate need of a substantial increase in the provincial foreign film labour tax credit to stop the exodus of production. We are at risk of total industry erosion of infrastructure and jobs in this industry;

“Whereas there are currently 25,000 taxpaying jobs at risk here. The end effect will result in millions of dollars in lost direct revenues for the province and hundreds of thousands of dollars the provincial government will have to pay out in unemployment insurance benefits;

“Whereas an increased provincial foreign production services tax credit is not a subsidy that will be a drain on provincial coffers. It will only serve to protect the livelihoods of thousands of industry-dependent workers and taxpayers, as well as the ever-so-important infrastructure that has taken decades to develop;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, as workers in the Ontario film production industry, demand immediate action by the Liberal government to act swiftly to save the foreign film and television production sector.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Mr Bryant moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners’ Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / *Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bryant.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I’m going to share my time with the member from Willowdale, a great parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The member from Willowdale sat on the standing committee of the Legislative Assembly for the entirety of the four days of public hearings into Bill 132, which wrapped up on February 3. I know he will be speaking to some of the issues that arose from those hearings, and I, of course, want to make some comments about Bill 132.

First, I'd like to thank all members from all parties who sat on the committee on the Legislative Assembly. It was four days of hearings. In the days when I sat on legislative committees for four and a half years, I don't ever remember four days of hearings on anything when the Conservatives were in power, certainly not on the subject of dog safety. I was pleased that over 100 people and organizations participated in the public hearings, either in person or in writing, and those who attended as observers were there and had an opportunity to be heard.

I also want to thank all of those who participated in the consultations prior to the drafting of Bill 132. I held a round table on September 9 last year that was well attended, with representatives of a variety of positions, including police officers, municipalities, bylaw enforcement officers, humane societies, dog trainers, the National Companion Animal Coalition and the Canadian Kennel Club. That was just one day of round table discussions and this preceded the input that ministry officials and or myself received directly.

We had meetings with a number of different groups. We received volumes and volumes of material, and we received significant deputations. I thank all ministry officials who participated in this remarkable consultation, on all sides of the issue, for their work, and the MPPs, who also consulted with many people on this and provided their input. I and ministry officials received input from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the city of Mississauga, the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, who also deserve additional thanks for graciously hosting ministry officials and providing a tour of their facility in Newmarket. Of course I also thank the thousands of people who answered the call for input regarding this issue. Not all of the e-mails that were received were supportive of it, but certainly we received input from a lot of people over a significant period of time. I think that probably more consultation has gone into this bill than any other bill on the subject of dog bites, dangerous dogs and pit bulls, maybe in the history of the Commonwealth.

1530

Bill 132 is about public safety. The public at large want the freedom to walk their streets, their parks, their fields and enjoy their backyards without serious, dangerous attacks. I say that pit bulls are a breed apart, an inherently dangerous dog that over time, if this bill passes, will decreasingly cause the serious attacks that they routinely are responsible for in Ontario.

I know some people say that they aren't responsible for the attacks; it's the dog owners. The dog owners are indeed responsible. That's why we've made changes under Bill 132 to put forth deterrence to irresponsible dog ownership like no other deterrence that exists in the country in terms of the penalties and the extent to which we will now be able to intervene in situations where people are being irresponsible. That doesn't just apply to pit bulls; that applies to all dogs and all breeds of dogs.

I say again that pit bulls are inherently dangerous. No matter the nurture, they are an inherently dangerous dog,

and I'll be speaking to that a little later on with some scientific evidence and some remarks by a number of people who know something about dogs.

But I say we're not going to back down, because we believe that this bill is about public safety. We believe that this bill will make our communities safer. That's why we're doing this. I look forward to the debate, from those who oppose the bill, as to how they think the status quo is somehow satisfactory, because it is not. It is difficult to imagine a week that goes by in this province, it seems, where we don't have another report of a pit bull attacking somebody or some pet—more on that in a moment.

The bill delivers by addressing the severity and frequency of dog attacks in Ontario, by addressing the problem of pit bull dangers and their propensity for severe attacks. Secondly, the bill delivers by addressing dog bites and irresponsible dog ownership generally. One more pit bull attack is one too many.

We heard from people who have experience with legislation such as this, and the best example we have is a Canadian example. Tim Dack, the chief operating officer of the City of Winnipeg's Animal Services Agency, stated very clearly, "Since the restrictions came into effect"—in Winnipeg—"the number of reported bites by pit bull-type dogs has been reduced from 28 in 1989, to 11 in 1990, to zero in 2004. Altogether there were 310 dog bites reported in the city in 1989. Over the years this number has generally declined, with 159 bites reported in 2004."

The point here is, first, the goal in Winnipeg was to reduce pit bull attacks, and it succeeded. For those who say that this bill will be ineffective, I ask, how do you say that in the face of the experience in Winnipeg and Kitchener-Waterloo?

Second, there is always this hypothetical that somehow, as the pit bull population declines, we will get more serious dog bites from other breeds. On the contrary. We learned from the Winnipeg experience that in fact, overall, dog bites went down in the city of Winnipeg. So not only were pit bull bites not replaced by other dog bites, but overall the community was safer. That's what we in this government want for the people of Ontario.

We also heard from Councillor Berry Vrbancic and Regional Councillor Jake Smola for the city of Kitchener, who informed us that there has been, in their words, a dramatic drop in pit bull attacks, with 18 incidents in 1996, before the ban was put into place, and approximately one per year after the ban. So when they were asked overall about their assessment of the ban in Kitchener, they said this: "A ban on pit bulls has worked in Kitchener and Waterloo, and that is why we are here to express our support for this bill.... We believe that every citizen in every city and town across Ontario deserves the same level of safety that we have in Kitchener and Waterloo."

I think we have to acknowledge the courageous and pioneering work done by Councillor Berry Vrbancic, who I know was a pioneer in this area here in Ontario,

and also the work done in the city of Winnipeg. There are other municipalities across Ontario that are either adopting or have adopted a pit bull ban. Windsor is one. I'll get to Windsor in a moment.

We also heard in the committee hearing some powerful testimony from people on the front lines who have to face pit bulls at their most dangerous. Consider the compelling testimony from Chief Julian Fantino, who spoke on behalf of the country's largest municipal police service. Mr. Fantino said in no uncertain terms, "Pit bulls pose a very serious, very real and legitimate threat to the safety of the public and to our police officers." He went on to say, "These officers know better than anybody that appropriate and consistent training is essential for any breed of dog. However, they also have experienced firsthand what can happen with predatory-type dogs, regardless of their training or circumstance. These officers have seen the utter viciousness and severe rage with which these dogs attack." That is compelling.

We heard from other police officers. The Police Association of Ontario supports the position taken by the Toronto Police Service. The Police Association of Ontario, as you know, is an organization representing over 21,000 police and civilian members from 63 police associations across the province. These people are on the front lines of community safety, and they have testified in reference to encounters with dangerous dogs, "...the overwhelming number of examples we have received from our membership involve pit bulls."

There were moments during the debate, public in the media and otherwise, where people posed the question, is it nature or nurture? The argument was made by some that it is completely nurture. I don't think anybody would ever doubt that there are certain dog breeds that have certain inclinations that make them particularly good at things. If we think of the bloodhound, we think of the working dog; we think of the dog that's able to track better than others. It defies common sense to suggest that genetics don't play some kind of role in terms of the wiring of any particular breed.

Recently we heard from a University of Windsor behavioural genetics researcher. I'm relying here on the Windsor Star in reporting, "The Ontario government is justified in banning pit bulls because by nature some mammals are more aggressive than others, says a University of Windsor behavioural genetics researcher." This professor of biological sciences, Doug Wahlsten, said, "The important thing we've found is that ... some genetic strains are more affected than others.... I think (banning pit bulls) is a public safety issue." Wahlsten's research—and again I'm relying on the article here—regarding genetics and behaviour has been published in Science magazine. He said that similar research was done in the Netherlands, the US and Finland. I'm quoting here from Wahlsten again: "The rearing does not change their heredities."

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I'm not doubting that the behaviour of dog owners is very important. That's why there is a component in our

bill supported by some who didn't support the bill in general but who had been asking for a long time for new opportunities and powers for animal control officers to try to prevent dangerous dog attacks, not just pit bull attacks but all dangerous dog attacks. It was in that name that we brought in that other component of this particular bill.

It's not just the behavioural science professor from Windsor who has spoken to this. Others have spoken to it. That includes people who have experience with these dogs. There's a television show called Ultimate Dogs: Behind the Bite. In this show, the videotape that I saw of it, a number of things were said by people who know something about pit bulls.

Sandra Alway, American pit bull terrier owner and president of the Golden Horseshoe American Pit Bull Terrier Club, said, "The breed was really honed and perfected over the sport of dog fighting.... They get something in their head and they're going to do it unless they've been taught otherwise.... We don't believe that off-leash parks for this breed are a good place for them to be. They may not start the fight, but they will surely finish it." It is true; I think Ms. Alway has got it right on this front.

Kerry Vinson, a canine behaviourist, said, "The original people who created pit bulls tended to cull out any that showed aggression to humans. On paper that certainly sounds good, but the reality is there's been quite a few attacks on humans by pit bulls." That's for sure. There's no doubt that there have been quite a few attacks on humans by pit bulls.

A dog trainer, Jennifer Segal, said, "These animals are really being raised to"—as she put it—"hate other animals.... When they do go into that mode of biting or attacking, they would rarely if ever stop."

American pit bull terrier breeder Doug Marr said this: "They have a lot of power, it's phenomenal, it's extreme. I know dogs that are 30 pounds in weight pull and they're pulling over 1,500 pounds."

This conforms with most people's understanding of what pit bulls were originally bred to do and what they have been doing. So what are we doing? We are saying that, over time, we need to have an Ontario that does not see pit bull attacks. We begin that, if this bill passes, by increasing the safety of pit bulls currently in Ontario. As recommended by most responsible dog owners, we would be requiring the leashing and muzzling of these dogs. We'd require them to be neutered or spayed in order to make them safer. Over time, as these pit bulls live out their natural life, we will see, as we saw in Winnipeg and Kitchener-Waterloo, fewer pit bull attacks. That's good news for public safety in Ontario.

At the same time—and this was reflected in the testimony we had before the public hearings and certainly conforms with what everybody I spoke to said about the population of humane societies across Ontario—even before this debate began, even a year ago, we had a situation in our humane societies where a disproportionately high number of dogs being dropped off there by

their owners were pit bulls. We heard some of those numbers during the testimony. I think for one humane society, 25% of the overall dog population were pit bulls. There is no doubt that humane societies don't have an easy time adopting out pit bulls. My concern is that over time, five or six years from now, we're going to have a situation where humane societies are bursting at the seams with pit bulls because, as we increasingly get more and more attacks on other animals and on people, we're going to have an unsustainable situation where the pit bull population of Ontario is going to be growing up, or not, in humane societies. I don't see the humanity in that at all.

At the end of the day, though, there is no question what the motivation behind this bill is: It is to increase public safety for Ontarians. We want to have fewer pit bull attacks, and over time, this will do that. We want to put into place the tools and deterrents to deal with irresponsible dog ownership, and this bill will put that into place.

I look forward to the debate. I look forward to seeing where the parties stand in the vote to come in this Legislature. I ask members for your support.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Thank you, Mr. Attorney, and again, thank you to all those who participated in the debate around Bill 132, whether you did so in person, in writing, in consultation with the ministry or otherwise. Thank you, all.

As alluded to by the Attorney General in his opening remarks, I was present for all four days of public hearings into Bill 132. I heard every story. I heard every argument that was presented. In listening to the presenters, it became clear that there was a great amount of confusion and resultant concern surrounding Bill 132. What I'd like to do in the remaining time is allay some of those concerns by clarifying some of the confusion about Bill 132.

One of the most prevalent concerns that we heard in committee was the idea that Bill 132 would punish all dogs under the enumerated breeds for something that not all dogs of that breed are culpable for. We've heard that Bill 132 would be overly inclusive. It is true that some pit bulls have never and may never bite or attack but will nevertheless be captured by Bill 132. But what does it mean to be caught by Bill 132? The answer for many seems to result from misinformation.

A written submission from the American Kennel Club stated, "Many owners of the breeds that will be impacted by Bill 132 are extremely responsible, yet still will be forced to part with dogs who have become loving members of their family." This is not true. They will not have to. Bill 132 does not mean that you cannot own a pit bull already in existence. It does not mean that the police or animal control officers will be rounding up pit bulls. Responsible pit bull owners will not have to give up their dogs.

What Bill 132 does require is this: Pit bull owners must spay or neuter their dogs. Pit bull owners must ensure that their dogs have leashes and muzzles on when

they are outside in public. It means that pit bull owners cannot train their dogs for fighting. It means that people will not be able to import pit bulls into the province of Ontario. It means that pit bull owners cannot abandon their dogs. If a pit bull owner chooses to give up their pit bull, they are doing so by choice, not by force.

Bill 132 would eliminate pit bulls in the most humane of ways: by letting them live out their natural lives while at the same time ensuring that they do not create more pit bulls. We are eliminating pit bulls by prohibiting their further breeding. Do pit bulls have a right to breed? Clearly, they do not.

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Additionally, the problem that Richard Paquette of the Greater Sudbury animal control office identified—that irresponsible pit bull owners ignore penalties imposed by the courts, have no assets to collect and therefore are immune to prosecution—is fixed by Bill 132. These people who choose to disregard the law have a new motivation for compliance and payment of outstanding fines: that is, up to six months in jail.

Another concern raised by many is that municipalities will be financially affected to their detriment because of Bill 132. We do not agree. Municipalities are responsible for animal control. They always have been. They have the infrastructure, the facilities and the professionals to ensure proper animal control. Any added burden caused by new animal control requirements under Bill 132 would result from enforcing infractions of new Bill 132 requirements. Infractions under Bill 132 are accompanied by increased fine provisions, and these fines will be going on to the municipalities. The result is that where there is a need for increased enforcement, there is likely an infraction; and where there is an infraction, there will be increased fines. The two go hand and hand and cannot be separated; hence, costs will be recovered.

As we've heard time and time again, not only are pit bulls problems for animal control officers and the police, but they flood our humane societies and pounds. The evidence was that, at any given point in time, about a quarter of all dogs in the pounds are pit bulls. Over time, as the pit bull population decreases, so too should the costs currently borne by municipalities and pounds in dealing with these dogs.

The standing committee also heard from Wesley Prosser, from Clearwater township. The township of Clearwater is concerned with the costs associated with the detention in a pound where a pit bull is seized under a warrant. Mr. Prosser would like to ensure that the municipality is not bearing this cost. The answer to this is that the municipality already has the authority to ensure that the maintenance costs are borne by the owner. Municipalities currently have the ability to create bylaws to address this. We are not changing this. In fact, I note that Bill 132 would make it possible for a judge to order restitution to be paid to alleviate these costs even if municipalities choose to do nothing.

We've also heard from many people that Ontario should increase licensing requirements for dog ownership

and enforce these requirements so that the municipalities may offset costs of animal enforcement. People have stated that in Calgary, for instance, there is approximately 90% licensing compliance. Licensing is a great way for municipalities to earn revenues, but licensing is, as it has always been, the prerogative of the municipalities. This is nothing new; it has always been that way. This begs the question, if it is such a great means of raising revenue and ensuring more responsible dog ownership, why have more municipalities not been more active in this regard? If it will lead to better animal control, then municipal residents should be asking this very question of their municipalities. Perhaps now is the time that there will be some action.

The government of Ontario has consciously, in consultation with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, not mandated the manner in which you operate your animal control and dog ownership schemes. That remains within the purview of the municipalities. If you feel that licensing is necessary for the success of dog control, then you have no reason not to do so, and the people of your given municipality should come to expect it from you. Nothing in Bill 132 would impede municipalities' ability to create such a licensing regime, and I encourage you to do so.

Another common theme in the submissions to the committee is the need for legislation dealing with dangerous dogs. Many have indicated that we should be basing our legislation on the behaviour of a dog when determining whether a dog is a dangerous dog. We've heard that we need to statutorily define or deal with dangerous dogs, but what is a dangerous dog? Windsor defines a dangerous dog as "one that has bitten, attacked, caused injury to a person or has exercised a propensity, tendency or disposition to do so." The example of Calgary, so often referred to, defines a vicious dog as one that, among other things, "chases, injures, bites, damages or destroys property, or threatens an animal or human." If we compare these definitions to Bill 132, we can see that Bill 132 deals with dangerous dogs under the "menacing dog" provisions, even if they are not referred to by the moniker "dangerous" or "vicious" dogs.

Menacing behaviour is caught by Bill 132. Without speculating on what a court may decide, it is clear that much, if not all or more, of the activities caught by those jurisdictions that define dangerous dogs or vicious dogs is captured by Bill 132's "menacing" provisions.

How do these other jurisdictions deal with a dangerous or vicious dog? They do it with leashing, muzzling and other control provisions. Some even require, as the Ontario Veterinary Association recommended to the Attorney General, that dangerous dogs be spayed or neutered to reduce aggressive tendencies. How is this different from Bill 132? If a dog is found to be menacing or to have attacked, that dog must be sterilized. Additionally, it is open to Ontario courts to make any additional order that the court deems appropriate. There is nothing in the Calgary bylaw that a court could not order here in Ontario.

People have pointed to Ms. Munro's bill as adequately addressing public safety and vicious dogs, but the government's Bill 132 does more than Ms. Munro's private member's bill. Her bill does little to protect the public from dangerous or vicious dogs. Ms. Munro would allow a vicious dog to be dealt with—and this is important—only after it has inflicted a severe physical injury or killed a person. How does this enhance public safety? On the other hand, Bill 132 would mean that dogs that pose a menace to public safety could be dealt with. We do not believe that we should have to wait for a dangerous dog to actually bite or attack before it is dealt with.

It should be clear from what I and the Attorney General have said today that there is much in common between those who oppose Bill 132 and those who support it. We all agree that something needs to be done to address the larger issue of public safety as it relates to dogs. Divergence of opinion occurs in relation to the additional aspects of Bill 132; that is, the part that will rein in the severity of dog attacks, namely the pit bull ban. If people come to understand Bill 132 in its entirety, they will come to realize that it is the best thing for the safety of the people of Ontario.

In summary, I have had the chance to become very familiar with public safety issues around dog attacks, and I know that this bill is and will prove to be in the interest of all Ontarians. I ask this House to allow Bill 132 to do the work it is very capable of doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for opportunity to speak to Bill 132.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity not only to speak on this bill but also to participate in committee.

There are so many things that were brought forward here that need to be brought forward again, and part of it was the identification aspect. I know, when I was in the member opposite's riding—Brant—the concern came forward that there were seven different types of dog breeds that one dog was identified by. That was one of the big concerns coming forward: to ensure that that specific breed is the one going to be targeted. This individual came forward and went on to explain that he was going to register his dog because he wasn't sure what breed it was; it was a crossbreed of some kind.

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I don't think that anybody has any concern with the viciousness of a dog, but they do have concerns, and I fully agree—I don't agree with this bill—that breed-specific legislation will not assist in this. What happens with the mastiffs or the Dobs or the shepherds or any of the other dogs that will be replacing the pit bulls as time moves forward? That's where the concern comes forward.

The AG spoke about Julian Fantino. Well, when I spoke to the former deputy chief of police from the region of Durham and asked him his information—because he knew; he was a dogger and he knew dogs

quite well—he said that the number one dog bite report—these are incidents that have gone to a police report—in the region of Durham was Labs. There are probably various reasons for that—maybe there are more Lab breeds—but it was the number one dog report in there.

Also, when you talk about going to the pound and the fact that the pound is flooded with pit bulls, well, when legislation comes forward like this, that's how people react. If you talk to doggers, it's the same as when 101 Dalmatians came forward. All of a sudden, there was a huge onslaught and everybody wanted a Dalmatian puppy. Well, shortly after Christmas, when the puppy novelty had worn out, so had the desire for the dog. Guess where they went. To the pound.

The other part is the motivation. In the same time frame that we have been talking about dogs, the province has lost about \$250 million in tax revenue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to make some comments on the presentations by the Attorney General and the member for Willowdale. I have to say that when this issue was first brought to light, I guess it was late last year, August or something, as the result of a significant and horrifying incident that occurred, everybody's knee-jerk reaction, of course, was one of horror, one of outrage and one of a desire to do something as quickly as possible to ensure that this kind of thing doesn't continue to occur in the province of Ontario.

Unfortunately, what we ended up with is something that is not going to really have the kind of desired effect that I think people were hoping for when this particular attack occurred and raised the issue, if you want to call it that. When I look at what has happened since then, since the legislation was first introduced and the process of public hearings occurred, the opportunities for the government to do the right thing and make this the appropriate piece of legislation that expert after expert after expert indicates that we should be doing, it makes me kind of wonder what the heck is going on around here. It makes me kind of wonder why it is that we stubbornly dig our heels in when we hear quite clearly from those people who know very well not only what has happened in our communities across the province, but what's happened across this country and across the world, in fact, when it comes to the requirements of really having an effect on vicious dog attacks for the people that live in communities all over the world.

Quite frankly, it's very disappointing and very disturbing that we end up where we do today and where we are going to end up tomorrow, having to deal with legislation that is totally ineffective and inappropriate in the context that we expected.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to rise today to support this very important legislation. It's very important that public safety is a priority right across this province.

I know that in my community of Scarborough we have had vicious attacks by pit bulls. I've had the unfortunate circumstance of being able to see a smaller dog that was

attacked by a pit bull a number of years ago while I was out knocking on doors. I didn't see the attack; I saw the dog about a week and a half later. The damage that these dogs do is almost incomprehensible. There is no question that something had to be done. Too many attacks, too many people, women, children, men, being injured, maimed, if not killed. Something had to be done. So I thank the Attorney General for stepping up to the plate and moving forward.

If you don't take our word as politicians for the need for change, then let's see what Julian Fantino, chief of police for the city of Toronto, had to say when he was at committee. He said, "These officers know better than anybody that appropriate and consistent training is essential for any breed of dog. However, they have also experienced first-hand what can happen with predatory-type dogs, regardless of their training or circumstance. These officers have seen the utter viciousness and severe rage with which these dogs attack." This legislation "will improve community safety and also police officer safety."

The chief went on to talk about a takedown and the experiences that happen with these dogs in takedowns, about the fact that when these dogs are shot, they just keep going.

We can't let this continue. We have to take action. This government is standing strong, taking action. I thank the Attorney General for his leadership in this area. Our streets in the city of Toronto, in my own community of Scarborough and right across this province will be safer because this government has taken action to ban these pit bulls.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I just listened to the Attorney General, and he's dreaming in Technicolor. He talked about dogs getting something into their head and not being able to stop them. I think the same could be said about him with this bill. Look at the testimony we had over four days of public consultation. He said that not all the testimony was in support of the bill. Well, for his information, just about all of it was against: 81 of 103 presenters at the public hearings on Bill 132 strongly rejected the proposed ban. All the experts rejected it. He talked about Chief Fantino. I had the opportunity to question Chief Fantino, and he's not a dog expert. I know he's trying to look out for the protection of his officers, and I recognize that, but I asked him about a Staffordshire bull terrier. He had no idea what it was. He had no idea that it's a 30-pound, 14-inch-tall dog that's the nanny dog in England—there are 250,000 in England—and none of them have hurt anybody here in Ontario.

You have been very selective in your quotes and have made a sham of this whole process. You have insulted the people who came before this committee by being so selective. I'm frankly embarrassed that you have the gall to be in here and put blinders on and not even listen to the people who came before this committee. You have a flawed bill. You could have made a good bill. You could have listened to all the people who came before us and

gave testimony, but you have not. The parliamentary assistant from Willowdale treated the whole process like it was a courtroom. He cut off people who were trying to make a point so he won his point. Well, yes, but he didn't let them say what they wanted to say. Wasn't the process about trying to learn something? I'm embarrassed by the process we went through. I sat through five days. I listened to the people. You certainly did not listen to the people who came before the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Reply?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I thank all members for their comments. It's very interesting to hear Tory MPPs say that Chief Fantino knows nothing about public safety. I tell you what: I'm going to take his word on public safety more than I'm going to take their word on public safety.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Miller: On a point of order, Speaker: I did not say that.

The Deputy Speaker: I hadn't recognized you yet, but I guess the point of order is over.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Simcoe North, you're not even in your seat.

Now I think we're all back to normal. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I have hit a nerve here. The Tories are—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Just tell the truth.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Simcoe North, your interjection isn't necessary, particularly from where you are. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The truth is, Chief Fantino is an expert on public safety and I'll take his word on public safety over their word any day.

There's no question. The argument, as I understand it, is that this measure will not be effective. Well, there's no doubt as to its effectiveness in Winnipeg and in Kitchener. By sheer logic, if over time you have fewer pit bulls, of course you're going to have fewer pit bull attacks. Of course you are. The argument, presumably, is that somehow this is not humane, I guess, or that this is philosophically unsound, I guess. I say two things to that.

Firstly, I believe that, overall, a bill that is about public safety and is going to mean fewer dog attacks and fewer pit bull attacks ought to be supported by this Legislature. It's up to members to decide that. But as to the humanity of this, I do not see the humanity of letting pit bulls continue to attack people and other pets, and for pit bulls to be the number one occupant of humane societies going forward, in the years to come. That is not humane. What is humane is this bill, and I ask all members to support it.

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Mr. Dunlop: Sit down. Your time's up.

The Deputy Speaker: To the member for Simcoe North, who still isn't in his seat, I'll handle the order of things from the chair. I don't need your advice on if

somebody should be standing or sitting, but I would like you in your seat if you're going to do anything.

Further debate?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to third reading of Bill 132. Just for the record, I was there when Chief Fantino spoke to the public hearings. He basically said, and I think everyone would agree here, that the criminal element was using the pit bull as the dog of choice. Who couldn't support any police officer with respect to wanting to make sure that the criminal element is not using a vicious dog of any nature? For the record, Mr. Miller made no comments about Chief Fantino; I know he has total respect for him, as we all do here in this Legislature.

I'd like to just deal with the fatal flaws of this bill: everybody knows that it is fatally flawed. It's very evident that we weren't listened to by the government. At the public hearings in Barrie, one of the people the Barrie Examiner spoke to was a Marianne Robertson of Bradford—owner of Angel, a four-year-old pit bull terrier—who opposed Bill 132 because she believes that it doesn't recognize that all dogs have the potential to be dangerous.

Also, a person by the name of Nick Coburn commented on it. He had been attacked by a dog. He said that he didn't require stitches after the bite, but the German shepherd did break skin when it tore into his 11-year-old's leg. The Angus resident was rolling past the unleashed pup on inline skates when the animal attacked. "It was a bad experience," says Coburn and his mother, Leeanne Campbell. 'Still, it isn't cause to bring about legislation banning the breed. It's the owner's responsibility, not the dog's,' said Campbell, a German shepherd owner and dog lover."

That was the theme that we heard throughout the hearings, and we listened; the Conservative caucus listened. We put forth amendments because of the major flaws in this legislation, because everybody knows that the problems are the enforcement of the Dog Owners' Liability Act and also dealing with irresponsible dog owners. Those are the problems. So we put forth amendments, because Bill 132 did not deal with increasing and improving enforcement; it did not deal with irresponsible dog owners. We put forth amendment after amendment—and the NDP did, too—and every amendment we put forth was defeated by the government.

The type of amendments we were looking to put in, for example, were ensuring "that municipalities have the resources they require to enable them to provide effective municipal dog control in the interests of public safety." Now, the Attorney General is on the record as saying that they will not provide one nickel to the municipalities to help improve enforcement. How are we going to get better enforcement in that particular area?

I got a letter from the town of Brock. It was addressed to Michael Bryant, January 27, 2005, and they cc'd me. In that letter, there were questions posed by one of the constituents in the township of Brock. Their answer to a

question posed by Mrs. Hunt was that, if Bill 132 is proclaimed, "the township would have no choice but to assume all costs associated with the act, as this would be the law. The province has not proposed a cost-sharing program"—and they haven't, and they won't, according to the Attorney General.

The next question posed by Mrs. Hunt to the township of Brock is—if Bill 132 is proclaimed, the township could experience budget increases such as extra staffing, training and equipment and shelter administration. The fact of the matter, and the Attorney General knows this, is that most municipalities do not have effective dog bylaw enforcement; they just don't. Now, what he's doing is saying to municipalities, "You've got that responsibility," and he's also giving it to police officers to enforce the bill.

We also wanted an amendment that we heard from the constituents "to provide for the development and implementation of a comprehensive program including education, training and other measures to encourage responsible dog ownership"—voted down by the Attorney General and his friends. Irresponsible dog ownership is the problem, not only with the criminal element that uses pit bulls and vicious dogs, but the fact that many dog owners are not properly trained in terms of how to deal with their dogs. That was voted down.

We also proposed providing for the development and implementation of a comprehensive dog bite prevention strategy to encourage dog owners to take all reasonable steps to prevent their dogs from biting persons or domestic animals—voted down. How can you vote down that type of amendment?

We also put forth an amendment providing for the establishment and operation of a province-wide dog bite registry. That came out of a coroner's inquest, in terms of making sure we know what's going on in the province, which dogs are biting, what's happening in the different areas of the province—voted down by the Attorney General and his friends. That's irresponsible in terms of trying to deal with a problem that is not going to go away.

As I said, we're dealing with fatally flawed legislation. The public has been misled by the government, because not one—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, you might want to withdraw that.

Interjection.

Mr. Tascona: The public has been led to believe by the government that Bill 132 is going to solve the public safety problems of vicious dogs. After March 1—we're voting on this tomorrow—there won't be one less pit bull or vicious dog on the street, and I think Mr. Zimmer, the PA, pointed this out, to his credit. So the same public safety concerns are going to be there on March 2, the day after we vote this bill through. We won't be supporting this, because this bill is fatally flawed.

I would say that in terms of this issue, the public really believes that pit bulls will be off the street. They really believe that all the problems will be solved. That's the

spin; that's not reality. It's not going to happen. The same streets and the same animals are all going to be there the day after Bill 132 is passed. The public will be no better protected, and they know that.

The saving grace—because we cannot stop the Liberal majority—is that we know this legislation is going to be constitutionally challenged. They know they are going to get hit with it. The fact of the matter is that they know it's over-inclusive. They know it's going to be a problem with respect to how they're going to get enforcement on the pit bull identification issue. All the amendments from the Liberal government that came forth at the hearings were on the identification issue with respect to pit bulls, because they are so afraid it's going to be challenged in the courts after it's passed. So they brought in all these amendments, which are only going to cause increased litigation and an increased waste of court time.

But the dog attacks are going to continue; there is no doubt about that. In the last three weeks in my riding we've had some vicious dog attacks. In one that was reported in the Barrie Examiner on February 12, a one-year-old Rottweiler was quarantined after attacking a woman in Essa township. The dog was quarantined for the required 10 days, and the police were advised that the owner would have the dog destroyed to prevent further incidents. This was a Rottweiler.

Also, a dog bite incident occurred on January 26, 2005, in Innisfil. An eight-year-old boy was hospitalized after he was bitten in the face by a dog. The dog is a nine-and-a-half-year-old shepherd-Rottweiler mix known as Jake. It's being investigated by the police.

Also, there was a vicious dog attack with respect to a pregnant dog last week in my riding, with tremendous damage to the dog, and it was not a pit bull.

The issue here—and the government is not listening—is that the public wants protection from vicious dog attacks. That's what they want protection from. Nothing has been done with respect to enforcement. There will be no money to help municipalities with respect to enforcement. Nothing has been done to deal with irresponsible dog owners. We heard from the experts. The experts said that if you properly train your dog, and the dog owner is working with the experts, then the chances of a dog bite will be decreased by up to 90%. That wasn't listened to. We were looking for the government to work with municipalities about responsible programs, and the government didn't listen.

There are a number of questions I want to pose to the Attorney General, because they never answered and I want to get his views on this. The Liberal government, in our view, is playing politics with this issue. It's another example of a public relations exercise rather than responsible government.

Why doesn't this act, which is Bill 132, target negligent breeders and owners instead of punishing responsible pit bull owners?

Secondly, the United States Supreme Court in Alabama ruled that there was no genetic evidence that one breed of dog was more dangerous than another

simply because of its breed. The experts have told us, "Punish the deed, not the breed." The Attorney General refused to meet with these experts so that he could focus on hearing views from his own supporters. When will the government finally listen to the experts and experiences in other jurisdictions?

1620

Third, we have been hearing time and time again that this legislation, Bill 132, is unworkable. Pit bull bans have already been such a failure in the United Kingdom and the United States that 13 states have specifically prohibited bans. The Attorney General has not told us how he will manage any court challenges with respect to this breed-specific ban.

We got an inkling of it when we got into the hearing on the final day, with the amendments with respect to the reverse onus provision. They also had the nerve to bring forth evidentiary procedures with respect to a veterinarian certificate being conclusive evidence that a dog was a pit bull. Now, that's for the judge to decide, not a veterinarian. A veterinarian can offer their opinion, but it can't be conclusive evidence of what a pit bull is. Yet they brought that forth. Then they brought further measures with respect to the standard for findings of fact to be on a balance of probability and not dealing with—this is a criminal offence—proving beyond a reasonable doubt what is going on with respect to whether you're innocent or guilty. They brought in the reverse onus provision to make it easier for them to say, "OK, you prove to us that your dog is not a pit bull; otherwise you're guilty." That's not justice.

Fourth, the bill creates such a broad definition of "pit bull," and the Attorney General himself was unable to pick out the pit bull from similar-looking friendly breeds that could be put to death by this bill—put to death by the bill. If the minister cannot identify the breed that he wants to ban, how do you expect others to? He is saying to municipalities that don't even have dog bylaw enforcement, "It's your responsibility to decide whether that's a pit bull or not"—and the same thing with police officers. They're not trained in that. That's not what this is about.

During the Barrie hearings, we saw first-hand the compassion that the government had for non-pit-bull-bite victims. Michelle Holmes, a registered veterinarian technician, talked about being bitten by a chihuahua. I'd like to read you their exchange, straight from Hansard:

"Ms. Holmes: I've never, ever been attacked by a dog such as a pit bull. I have been bitten by a chihuahua, but we don't seem to be concerned about those....

"Mr. Zimmer: Did the chihuahua take your leg off?

"Ms. Holmes: No, but he did draw blood.

"Mr. Zimmer: So does a mosquito."

Can you believe that exchange? A young woman comes forth to testify at a public hearing. She is a veterinarian trained in the science, and that's the treatment she gets from Mr. Zimmer, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General.

Why is the government only concerned about pit bulls? I would bet that if the Attorney General's child,

any child in this House, was bitten by a pit bull, it wouldn't matter to you what breed it was. The issue is about vicious dog attacks.

Sixth, the government has been starting on a frightening trend of guilty until proven innocent these days. This bill fails to provide any process by which the additional breeds would be identified and places the onus of proof on the owners of the dogs.

Seventh, under the government bill, a criminal could conceivably break into your home, and if your dog defends you or your property against them, you could be fined. How can the bill fail to include "with provocation" as part of the criteria for determining if a dog's behaviour was inappropriate? All we're focusing on here is the dog. What about the dog owner?

Eighth, the Attorney General continues to use Winnipeg as an example of the success of a similar ban. What he forgot were the facts. When the ban was put in place in Winnipeg, the overall number of bites in the city went up and attacks by Rottweilers rose dramatically. How does this support the Attorney General's call for a breed ban over dangerous dog legislation? We should be focusing on vicious dog legislation. This was a great opportunity for the Attorney General to do something to deal with vicious dogs, but he didn't. The Attorney General said, "We have listened to the experts and the experiences of other jurisdictions." The committee was out there. I was with Julia, I was with Norm Miller and other members of our caucus, and they told us that legislation will not work. Breed-specific bans fail to address the real problem of irresponsible breeders and owners who breed and sell aggressive dogs. A dog just doesn't get that way automatically. The Attorney General would like to you believe that it just happens from birth. Come on.

Attorney General, will you listen to these recommendations that dangerous dog legislation should focus on responsible dog ownership rather than the breed? He did not.

Attorney General, will you consider Julia Munro's private member's bill that takes into account the experts and the experiences of other jurisdictions? This bill amends the Dog Owners' Liability Act to create a specific category of vicious dogs that is a workable alternative to the Liberal government's irresponsible breed-specific legislation. If the breed is the real issue, then why didn't the Liberal government worry about breeds that were initially bred for fighting and have inherently aggressive and possibly dangerous characteristics? Modern fighting dog breeds include the Great Dane, boxer, Mastino Napolitano, Dogo Argentino and the pug. Why didn't they find their way on to the provincial ban list?

I'll tell you why. I was there at the press conference that the Attorney General rolled out to announce that he was proceeding with Bill 132. He said categorically to the press, "Pit bulls are different; different than Rottweilers, different than any other type of dog. Pit bulls are fighting machines." Yet he didn't even know how to point out a pit bull when it was put forth to him. He

doesn't know what a pit bull is. When you go through the legislation, you will not be able to figure it out because it will be up to a judge to figure it out.

I want to deal finally with the real Winnipeg numbers. In Winnipeg, the overall number of bites in 1990, the year the ban was introduced, was 214, compared to 275, 264, 256 and 301 for the years 1991 to 1994. More importantly, Winnipeg statistics show a sharp increase in bites by two specific breeds that began in 1991, immediately after the ban was implemented.

This is not going to stop vicious dog attacks. That's why I feel for the public who believe that this bill will make them safer. It won't make them safer. We've lost a golden opportunity. The minister had a great opportunity to do something about vicious dog attacks and he didn't do it.

I'm sharing my time with the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka and the member for York North.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to join in the debate today on Bill 132, third reading of An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act.

I'd like to begin by reading a media quote: "The act is called 'An Act of Folly'. It was drawn up in days, welcomed with acclamation and relief, hurried through its stages and emerged as something neither clear nor fair."

That wasn't from the press any time lately. That was from the Daily Mail of September 7, 1995, in reference to British breed-specific legislation that passed in 1991. I'm afraid we're about to repeat the same process here in Ontario.

Also from England: "The cost of the legislation was estimated in the first four years at £20 million or more (kennel fees, court costs and legal aid)." The same thing is also about to be repeated here in Ontario, with a government that is having such difficulty in managing the finances of Ontario. It's certainly not going to help the economic situation here.

I'm very disappointed with the process we've gone through. We've had four days of public hearings, a day of clause-by-clause hearings and, really, the whole process has been a sham. We've had hundreds of submissions, and the government is simply not listening. What we've got is a flawed bill that is going to give people a false sense of security, but it's not going to protect people. It's really a shame because we did have many experts come before the committee over four days and make written submissions. Virtually all of the experts say that breed-specific legislation, specifically Bill 132, will not do the job it is intended to do, which is make it safer for the people of Ontario. That is a real shame, because we had all kinds of testimony, all kinds of information, and many, many different experts came before us.

It starts off right with the definition of what a pit bull is, because a pit bull is not a specific breed. It's like saying "a shepherd." In the definition in the bill, it says, "a pit bull terrier,... a Staffordshire bull terrier,... an

American Staffordshire terrier,... an American pit bull terrier," or any dog that basically looks like one of those dogs. That certainly creates all sorts of problems, because if you happen to have a dog that kind of looks like it and your neighbour thinks it's a menace, you're going to end up in court, your dog is probably going to end up in a kennel, and there are going to be all kinds of costs associated.

1630

We had a gentleman come before us in Brantford to make testimony. His name was Mike Martin. He got a dog, whose name was Sydney, from the SPCA. When he first got it, the picture on the Web site referred to the dog as an Akita. Then he sent it to a vet, and the next time—these are all recorded on paper; he did a wonderful presentation where he showed the actual documentation for this one dog with vets' signatures on it—it was referred to as an Australian shepherd. This is the same dog we're talking about. The third time, another expert referred to it as an American Staff cattle dog. The fourth time it was referred to as a pit bull, so we can assume that somebody thought it was a pit bull. Then the next time it was referred to as a Staffordshire bull terrier, which under this definition would be a pit bull.

Mr. Kormos: This is a multiple-personality dog.

Mr. Miller: This is a dog definitely with split personalities.

The point of his presentation is the confusion that will result with this legislation. If you have a dog that's a mutt and your neighbour thinks it's a menace, there will be no way—there's no DNA—to prove it's not a pit bull according to the definition. The lawyers are certainly going to love it, that's for sure, because there are going to be all kinds of court cases. It's going to cost municipalities, it's going to cost the province millions of dollars, but it's not going to make us safer. That is a real shame, because we've had all kinds of people take time to come before the committee and make presentations, but the government just was not listening.

I'll ask the member from York North to let me know when it's her time to speak so I don't just keep going on and totally forget to let her have an opportunity to speak.

We had all kinds of presentations come before the committee. Virtually all the experts say that breed-specific legislation will not work, will not make Ontario safer. For the life of me, I do not understand what the government has got to lose from passing good legislation. Does that make sense, Mr. Kormos? I don't think so. I really don't understand. I know the Attorney General has made maybe some political capital and is going to get some short-term political gain from this, but in the long run it's just bad legislation. We heard that from all the experts. I just do not understand why the government doesn't want to listen to all the people who came before us—all the veterinarians, animal control officers and the various people who gave testimony.

What kinds of things did they have to say? The animal control officer was referred to by the parliamentary assistant in his hit, and he took part of what he said. But

he also said, "In Sudbury there are fewer problems with pit bull incidents than with other types of dogs, both purebred and mixed. In 2004, 213 bite incidents were reported to the health unit. Of that number only 11 involved pit bull-type dogs, none of which were purebred. Legislation should focus on dangerous dogs of all breeds and mixes." We tried to amend this legislation to remove purebreds, because it was shown that the purebred dogs are not the problem, but the government refused to even consider that.

The American Staffordshire Terrier Club of Canada said, "Breed-specific legislation is an ineffective, costly, knee-jerk reaction to the problem of irresponsible dog ownership."

One of the most compelling testimonies was from Ms. Donna Trempe, whose daughter, Courtney, was killed by a dog. It must have taken unbelievable courage to come before the committee to make her testimony. I was fully expecting her to say, "I'm glad the government's doing this. It's about time we had strong legislation." But she did not say that. She pointed out that her daughter was killed by a bull mastiff. She also said, "Banning pit bulls will not solve the dog biting problem. What is needed are stiffer penalties and heavier fines for the owners of dogs that attack."

We heard from the Association of Animal Shelter Administrators of Ontario. They said, "Rather than prohibit certain breeds of dogs altogether, the government should introduce legislation to regulate dangerous dogs and potentially dangerous dogs. Higher licence fees and mandatory liability insurance requirements for dogs that bite or attack should be considered."

The government has made reference to Winnipeg. Unfortunately, they don't compare Winnipeg to Calgary. We did have that information, so I don't know why they wouldn't want to look at it, because the most successful jurisdiction in the country in terms of controlling dog bites is Calgary. It is a city bylaw, but they've done things like licensing; they have over 90% of the dogs in the city licensed. They have very specific rules about dog ownership and about when a dog must be on a leash. They've also got a significant component of education in their bylaw, and it's been successful. Since 1984, they've reduced the number of dog bites by 70%, and this at a time when the population of Calgary doubled. So that has been very successful, and we should be using that.

Other suggestions from people who came before the committee: Base decisions on the behaviour of the individual animal, regardless of breed or appearance; require that all dogs and cats adopted through municipal shelters be spayed or neutered; incorporate mechanisms to investigate and prosecute backyard puppy mill breeders who are producing and selling these animals for questionable purposes.

I have two boxes of information that came from people who made presentations before the committee and many experts. Virtually all the experts say this is flawed legislation that will not work, but the government is not listening to that. As I say, I do not understand why they

are not listening. I don't understand how they win politically from that. I wish they'd learn from England and Calgary. We've heard that New York state and California are places that have done well.

There's lots that can be done: education, control of breeders, licensing. Unfortunately, the government has made a sham out of this process and has not listened to the people who have come before it.

I say to the government that they should have a free vote on this. They talk about democratic renewal. Well, prove it. You haven't had a Liberal member vote against the government yet, and I know there are lots of them over there who don't feel very comfortable with the legislation. Allow members to have a free vote, because I know that those who sat on the committee, if they were listening at all, must know in their hearts that this is fatally flawed legislation. It's not going to do what it says it's going to do.

I think at this point I will pass it on to my colleague from York North.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I welcome the opportunity to join the debate today. We heard from people across the province; we heard from people in other jurisdictions, in Canada and outside. In the brief time I have, I'd like to concentrate on four particular aspects of this bill that reflect very genuine and deep concerns that people at those hearings demonstrated.

We heard a few moments ago about the issue of identification. Much has been made of the importance of identification, the importance of the reverse onus. The Attorney General, in some of his remarks with regard to responding to this, has talked about the professional nature, the ability of those people charged with the responsibilities of making breed determinations.

The previous speaker made reference to, I felt, one of the most important deputations we heard. This was Mike Martin, who is a dog owner from Hamilton. He explained to us the process by which he acquired a dog from the SPCA, which began on the Web site as an Akita, then became an Akita-American Staffordshire terrier, a bull terrier, an Australian shepherd and an American Staffordshire cross cattle dog. These seven designations were all done by people who were either at the SPCA, the vet assigned on behalf of the SPCA, his own vet or a vet at the emergency clinic. In other words, he only owns one dog. All that paperwork had been created over the first month he owned her.

He has a plea to the government. He says:

"To summarize all of this, this is what I want you guys to do; this is my plea. You've seen all the expert opinions, so I don't know how you could do anything but oppose the breed-specific portion of this bill. Anything else just doesn't make sense, so I'm assuming you're going to do that. I would also be so bold as to say that when you give your recommendations, I would like you to outlaw breed-specific laws in the province. I want you to force the municipalities to address the real issue. I want you to prevent ineffective laws and knee-jerk reactions, prevent killing innocent dogs, stop ignoring

aggressiveness in all the other breeds that have it and enforce responsible dog ownership.”

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I think he very graphically demonstrated for all of us on the committee the problems of identification and the kind of experts who are going to be charged with this responsibility.

I also want to move to a very important issue that came up in several different presentations, and that's the whole issue of ownership. We have heard already from people referring to the fact that Chief Fantino did come to the hearings and did support the bill. I think there are some very important messages he had for us as legislators. He referred to the dogs as weapons. He said that these dogs are used as weapons and that pit bulls are the choice for many criminals. He said, “Pit bulls are being used by criminals for the purpose of their own protection, facilitating their own escape or protecting their illegal enterprises.”

I think all of us share a concern not only for community safety, but clearly for the safety of our police officers. In providing us with his testimony, he made it very clear how very real this problem is. He goes on to say, “Our emergency task force officers say that, on average, one in four of the warrants they execute is at a place where there is a pit bull.”

So I think the important thing here for us to understand is that the criminal element has found a tool, a weapon. The concern is, one can raise the question that if criminals don't register their guns, are they going to neuter and muzzle their pit bulls? I think that it's much more important for us to look at the initiative around responsible ownership.

For that, I would like to turn to a deputation that we heard from Dr. Bonnie Beaver, who is a veterinarian, a board-certified animal behaviourist and a professor at Texas A&M University. She chaired the Task Force on Canine Aggression and Human-Canine Interactions for the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Here is what she had to tell us:

“There is a tendency to ban breeds as a result of a severe tragedy. It is a need to react. Unfortunately, it only causes a reaction; it does not affect the incidence of dog bites. Multiple scientific studies have shown that dog bite rates are not decreased by breed-specific legislation; they are simply a reaction. Why? There are several reasons for that. First of all, a dog's tendency to bite is governed by five things. The first is heredity, but the other four are owner- and victim-related. They include early experience of the dog, later socialization and training—or lack thereof....” These are the major contributors to dog bites.

“The scientific literature on dog bites concludes that breeds vary over time, breeds most represented are popular at the time, and no one breed is represented in proportion to its actual population.

“Contributing factors to dog bite incidences are related to owners. We find that dogs that have more likelihood to bite have no licensure, are not current on vaccinations, are not neutered, are male and are chained in the yard.”

When you look at the Calgary evidence, it certainly is an outstanding program that is a model for any city.

The issue of enforcement is also one that I think needs to have special attention because, in passing a bill such as this, the government is asking that municipalities come forward and enforce. So I'd like to take some information that came through the public hearing process from Elaine Buckstein, who is the director of bylaw enforcement for the city of Mississauga.

She began her remarks by talking about the importance of the inquest recommendations from the tragic death of eight-year-old Courtney Trempe and the fact that it provides a compelling model for all levels of government and animal service agencies. It made a number of recommendations to enhance and increase the number of education strategies targeting younger children to prevent vicious dog attacks and dog bites.

She goes on to say that the province divests great responsibility to municipalities to implement Bill 132. The government, of course, has not indicated any kind of financial support to go along with this increased regulatory burden. It also doesn't deal with the question of identification.

She goes on to say that the bill provides for a 90-day time frame in which owners of pit bulls must comply with regulations. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for staff to determine whether a pit bull was actually born between that time frame and when ownership commenced. She can only imagine that people are obviously going to describe their dog as anything but a pit bull on any future licensing.

The legislation also has a provision with regard to animals for research, where it specifies that the pound keeper becomes the individual making the determination.

The bill is silent on any question of liability, in terms of identification and in terms of any kind of judicial review that might come as a result.

The second-final point that she makes is that she would note that the current Municipal Act does allow municipalities to respond to situations within its own boundary regarding dangerous dogs. She suggests that the committee review and act upon the 33 recommendations of the jury into the death of Courtney Trempe.

My final comment is that I would just like to respond to the earlier comments made by the member from Willowdale with regard to my own private member's bill. I want to remind the member that in presenting a bill at first reading, it is exactly that. I would be delighted to have second reading and public hearings, with the view to hearing experts and the kinds of amendments that could be put forward. Unlike the government, I would welcome the opportunity to have public hearings and work on those amendments that might come from them.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It is my pleasure to make some comments on the debate by the members for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Parry Sound-Muskoka and North York. I wanted to start off by saying that you will find, when my caucus gets an opportunity to speak to this issue, that

everyone will be clear that New Democrats are extremely interested in ending the attacks on people by these vicious dogs. There's no doubt about it.

Unfortunately, what we see is the worst example of political opportunism that I have seen so far in this House. I am dismayed that the sensationalization and the pure politicization of this particular issue, not to mention the exploitation of victims, the demonization of breeds and the really stubborn, arrogant refusal of the government to heed the evidence that was brought forward at the public hearings that overwhelmingly told them that they are barking up the wrong tree, has not been dealt with. It's extremely frustrating.

I know that people from Hamilton came to those hearings. It has been mentioned a couple of times already. I know that I myself have received a number of e-mails from a gentleman named Jason Lavoie. Jason, if you're watching, thank you very much for sending that information along to me and to a number of other members of this Legislature.

In fact, the very chief of police from my community, whom I met with over lunch not too long ago with some of the Liberal MPPs in my community, has indicated that he does not support this particular thrust in terms of the legislation. He is concerned not only about the fact that it's not going to work, but also that in Hamilton, three-to-one dog bite complaints and vicious dog complaints are from a different breed than pit bulls. In this case, it happens to be German shepherds.

1650

The bottom line is, the problem with this legislation is very clear. The frustration that all of us on this side seem to have around the government's refusal to do the right thing with this legislation is extremely frustrating. It's really unfortunate that the people of Ontario are going to continue to suffer with inadequate protection from vicious dogs and vicious animals, because this legislation is certainly not going to be helping them.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Like the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, I too attended all four hearings of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. I heard every deputation and reviewed the many written submissions.

I come from a family that has bred big dogs. By nature, I started out predisposed against a breed ban. But at no point in the hearings nor in the written deputations did I hear a breeder or a trainer or any other organization opposing Bill 132 accept responsibility for what happens to their dogs once they are sold. No breeder said it would be responsible practice to ensure that pet stock pups should be spayed or neutered.

The philosophy that says every dog gets one free bite just isn't acceptable when one attack by a pit bull is no nip and run but a sustained attack; sustained, we were often told, until the attacking dog is killed, often requiring a police officer to shoot repeatedly. Dog owners told us about carrying home their pets with their internals exposed after a pit bull had ripped into their dogs. One lady who owned a cat and kept it in her yard told us in a

voice she struggled to keep together about having left the house for a time during which three pit bulls in a neighbouring yard crashed through a wooden trellis and tore her cat to pieces. She said all that was left were a few pieces of fur. Seniors said they wanted the sense of peace and security back in their parks; peace and security they felt was being lost to pit bulls, around which they felt unsafe.

Bill 132 isn't just about pit bulls; most of it is about strengthening the Dog Owners' Liability Act. On this point, just about all deputants agreed, and on these two sections no amendments were proposed. I look forward to the passage of Bill 132.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I too am pleased to comment on Bill 132. What concerns me about this bill is that all of the expert testimony we have seen does not support the bill, and the government has completely ignored it.

Something I was concerned about today was the audacity of the government to invoke the retiring chief of police in the city of Toronto, Julian Fantino, to defend their case, and how they said we were attacking the police chief. When that police chief was looking for more police on the streets to make the streets safer, this government turned a deaf ear to him. Now, all of a sudden, they're using him as their star witness, so to speak.

I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, that this bill has a lot of popularity in the city of Toronto because they don't understand all of the ramifications of the bill and what the bill will in fact fail to do. They've got a glossy picture of this being the panacea for all animal attacks in the city of Toronto.

The Liberals have brought this bill forward completely for political reasons. I submit to you, given that they're not too interested in more police—another murder last night in the city of Toronto—they are far less concerned about safer streets than they are about safer seats. That's what this bill is all about. It's politically motivated. It is not going to address the problem of dog bites in Ontario, particularly in the city of Toronto, our most populated area. That's where this government has failed to listen to the expert testimony about looking at amendments dealing with the problem of dog attacks, regardless of whether they come from pit bulls or any other breed, because those folks in that park are going to be just as alarmed if they see a whole bunch of Rottweilers running around there too.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to speak in support of the comments that were made by my colleagues in the Conservative Party. I spoke against this bill on second reading. I raised a number of concerns at that time, and said to the government that perhaps during the course of public hearings, when experts actually had an ability to come forward and have their say—because they certainly didn't have the ability to talk to the Attorney General before that—the government might listen to what people who deal with dogs the most have to say about what their behaviour is like and what is necessary to make sure we are dealing with public safety, and not

just dealing with a government that is looking at the headlines and trying to score some political points. I thought the point of the exercise was to deal with public safety.

I talked to Mr. Kormos during the course of the hearings and had an opportunity to read a number of the submissions; I didn't sit during the course of the hearings. I have to tell you that overwhelmingly, those people who have some expertise with dogs came forward and said very clearly to the government that a breed-specific ban is not going to work: "If you are interested in dealing with dangerous dogs, if you are interested in dealing with irresponsible pet owners, we have any number of suggestions and recommendations we can make, and if you could implement them, then we could do something about public safety and about irresponsible pet owners."

The reality is, the government didn't listen to anything those experts had to say. The government ignored the amendments that came forward. The government seems to be very interested in a lot of media hype around pit bulls, without dealing with the reality that tomorrow, or the day after this legislation passes, a German shepherd could easily attack a child on the street and this legislation wouldn't do a thing to solve that problem—nothing. I thought the government was interested in public safety. Dealing only with breed-specific bans is not going to deal with public safety.

The Deputy Speaker: Reply?

Mrs. Munro: I want to thank the members from Hamilton East, Mississauga West, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Nickel Belt for their comments.

I was particularly struck by the comment made by the member from Mississauga West when reference was made to the kind of response people heard, according to the member, with regard to positive solutions on the issue around dog bites and training and things like that. We had many, many people come to the hearings who are experts in dog training, who are experts—I referenced the Courtney Trempe inquest recommendations, and we also heard expert witnesses who talked about what works, particularly in Calgary. I want to comment particularly, too, because he made reference to the fact that his family had owned and, I gather, bred dogs at one time.

For many years, responsible breeders have, through membership in the Canadian Kennel Club, provided what were non-breeding registrations for their dogs, and of course that meant that those dogs would be spayed or neutered. So people have been very proactive in the understanding that this reduces the number of unwanted dogs, but also, by our expert testimony, we know it's a very helpful category of effective response to dog aggression. I think the problem we are hearing today is summed up by those who talked about political opportunism, the reluctance to understand that it's a real issue that requires real legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This is it; this is the end of the debate. Once we're up against 5:50 p.m., there will be a vote, and the debate, for purposes of the

bill, will have been concluded. But the issue is far from over.

I want to indicate that New Democrats are voting against Bill 132, and I'm going to tell you why. But before we get into that, I do want to make mention of some folks down in Welland. They are the couple who own Gord's Variety, down on Hellems Avenue, right beside Lee Wah Laundry. As you know, Hellems Avenue has been the victim of the sewer project from hell. That road has been torn up for it seems like years, but it really is well on to a year now or darn close to a year. A couple of small businesses have already gone belly up, and these people have just been hammered, the small entrepreneurs along Hellems Avenue, by an incredibly disastrous sewer project.

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I was in Gord's Variety and picking up my shirts on Saturday at Lee Wah, and stopped in next door because they'd been talking to my office. We sent them down to city hall. I stopped in at Gord's at 237 Hellems Avenue, at the corner of Regent. As it was, I picked up some lottery tickets; I've misplaced them. I haven't any idea where they are now. With my luck, they're probably the winners. I talked to Marta Bilyk, and she, along with her partner, John Mscichowski, young entrepreneurs, very bright young people, made a huge investment in Gord's Variety and are getting shafted royally.

All I'm doing is encouraging people, when they're in Welland, or Wellanders or folks visiting, to drop in at Gord's Variety, 237 Hellems Avenue, corner of Hellems and Regent. Buy your quart of milk, your couple of bottles of spring water, your lottery tickets, and give these people a little bit of a break. Cut them some slack because, Lord knows, nobody else has. So I'm just touting shamelessly Gord's Variety, 237 Hellems Avenue: good people, young entrepreneurs who deserve the community's support.

We've heard reference to the committee hearings. I suspect that some people found them more gratifying than others. I do want to indicate that all of us on the committee—I'll be bold enough to speak for all of us—want to extend incredible thanks to Philip Kaye, the research officer. He produced, along with a whole lot of other staff here, in the library amongst other places, research material that had been requested of him during the course of the hearings because, Lord knows, the government hadn't undertaken any of this research in the first instance. I have never seen so purportedly substantive a piece of legislation that was so ill researched in 17 years here at Queen's Park. I, for the life of me, have never been as disappointed to receive nothing, not a half-page, from the Ministry of the Attorney General with all their tremendous resources, by way of research. This government has embarked, I tell you, on what will be footnoted in the books of political history in the province as one of the most ill-conceived and sloppily organized—it's just a slovenly lack of organization around this bill, starting of course with the half-truths, "We consulted veterinarians, dog owners, dog breeders, experts A, B, C,

D etc.” Well, not according to them. From day one, the whole exercise was marred by that gap between what the Attorney General was telling folks and what the people he says he and his people were talking to were telling us.

Now, having heard from a big chunk of those folks, I understand why the Attorney General wouldn't want to talk to them. I was there at that press conference; remember? The Attorney General was just jogging into that Queen's Park press gallery room and he had the big backdrop, and it's red now. Again, far be it from me to criticize cheap publicity stunts, but there was the little bantam rooster of an Attorney General himself, saying, “Pit bulls—ban.” That's it. He got his hit for the day. I was hoping against hope that the spin doctors would be sending memos out of the Premier's office, because—look, don't blame the Attorney General. Folks, don't blame the Attorney General. This sort of stuff doesn't happen unless Dalton McGuinty's office gives it the stamp of approval. Mark my words, some member of the Liberal brain trust—that oxymoron rears its ugly head again—actually told somebody in the Premier's office that banning pit bulls was somehow going to build poll support for the Liberals by a good five to 10 points across the province; that there were going to be mass movements of popular support. What a crock. What a silly proposition. That worker should give you his or her salary back for the month in which they gave you that advice.

I met with the SPCAs—not boards of directors; with the workers, down in Niagara region—folks I know, many of whom I have known for all their careers. The folks down in Niagara region who work as SPCA officers and inspectors disagree with the fundamental proposition here that if you ban a particular breed, you're going to protect people from vicious dog bites. What hooley; what a load. Get out the manure spreader, because that's the line from the government: If you ban a particular breed, you're going to end vicious dog attacks; you're going to protect people—kids, because we know that kids are victims more often than adults are—you're going to protect kids from vicious dogs and their attacks. As I say, get out the manure spreader, because that is as big a crock and as heavy and as full a load as has ever been dumped here at Queen's Park, either inside or outside, and I've seen a few big loads being dumped in the course of 17 years here; trust me.

The problem, you see, is that the SPCA officers I've been talking to down in Niagara—a lot like SPCA officers across the province who joined us in committee hearings—disagree with the fundamental premise, but they also say, “Look, we don't have the resources to enforce this bill in any event, even if we thought it was going to be effective.” That provoked me to put questions to ministry staff about exactly what the bill does: “Does the bill require municipalities to participate in this ill-conceived so-called pit bull ban?” “No; it merely enables them.” Oh, I get it: These are the tools in the toolbox. That line didn't work very well when Mike Harris tried it; it doesn't float any better when it's a little rubber ducky in Michael Bryant's bathtub either.

The fact is, SPCAs are explaining that they don't have the resources to do what this bill would call upon them to do, even if they were inclined to want to do it. I have had occasion to point out to you and to members of the committee—I live down in Welland. There can be half a dozen yawning crocodiles in my backyard, the big 18-footers, on a Saturday afternoon and I couldn't get an animal control officer out there. There could be hyenas and hippopotami in my backyard down on Bald Street, and I can't get an animal control officer because we don't have animal control officers available to the community. The community is hard-cash-strapped, especially down where I am, like most of Ontario is, where our animal control officers and SPCAs deal not only with domestic and residential pet kinds of animals but are dealing with the farm and agricultural community as well. The mere pound capacity—because we learned about, as if we didn't know them before, the huge backlogs that this government is accountable for, that they're certainly responsible for, because the election was in 2003; enough time has passed that you can't blame it on the previous government.

Mr. Dunlop: Blame the NDP.

Mr. Kormos: No, you can't blame it on the previous government.

Mr. Dunlop: The one before that.

Mr. Kormos: Well, no. As a matter of fact, I heard about how, when Dalton McGuinty took over the Premier's office, Ernie Eves had left three envelopes on top of the cleaned-out desk. It's true. Ernie handed these envelopes to Dalton McGuinty—and we're going to honour Ernie Eves tomorrow—and said, “Look, Dalton: These envelopes are numbered one, two and three. When you have your first crisis, open the first one and follow that advice. When you have your second political crisis as a newly elected government, open the second one and follow that advice. And on the third crisis, open that one.”

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Sure enough, it wasn't—it was mere weeks before—

Mr. Dunlop: A couple of days.

Mr. Kormos: Mere weeks. Cut the guy some slack there, Mr. Dunlop.

So Dalton's in a flurry and he's in a panic. He opens the first envelope, and the first envelope says, “Blame the previous government.” Dalton was so pleased to have gotten that advice from Ernie Eves. Before you know it, he's got a second crisis. He tears open that envelope. It says, “Blame the federal government.” He did that. The third crisis happens, and he opens that third envelope and reads it. It says, “Prepare three envelopes.”

This government cannot abandon its responsibility for the incredible backlogs, for instance, in our justice of the peace courts. We've seen the havoc that's created with respect to bail hearings and release orders when it comes to even violent spouses who put their partners at risk when they're out on unenforceable or unenforced release orders.

But we also learned that dogs are going to be impounded, kept for up to six months at a time—that's the

kind of backlog we're facing in provincial offences court—with no certainty, because the dog may well have to be returned to the owner.

You heard about Mike Martin. He had the multiple personality dog. Mike Martin testified in Brantford. Wasn't it Brantford, folks? He does the nice thing; he gets this dog from his local humane society, the pound. He sort of rescues the dog, takes the dog home. The dog needs shots, so he goes to the vet. The vet signs it, I don't know, "collie" the first time and then "Labrador retriever" the second time. By the time it was over, six different vets had six different breeds of dog. That dog had a multiple personality disorder. It didn't need a vet; it needed a psychiatrist. It needed medication to help it come to grips with itself. So if we've got this high-priced expertise, one of the problems is—the amendment to section 19 I'm going to talk about in just a few moments.

Young Courtney Trempe was mauled to death by a vicious dog. None of us, not a single member of that committee, relished having even one more victim of a vicious dog attack. Make no mistake: I don't want to attribute that to my counterparts in the Conservative caucus or, quite frankly, to the Liberal members on the committee or in this chamber. I'm not going to stoop, because I found it regrettable that from time to time—you remember that, Mr. Dunlop?—the innuendo that suggests that somehow, if you don't support the breed ban, you are in favour of people being attacked by dogs. That was regrettable, cheap shots. I am prepared to concede that not a single member of that committee took or takes any comfort or joy in dog attacks. We had some horrible, horrible stories, true stories; no reason to doubt a single sentence or word of what we were told.

Young Courtney Trempe, mauled to death by a vicious dog, with her short life, made a great contribution in so many ways. The way that affected the public was by being the subject of a coroner's inquest, which resulted in a lengthy list of recommendations around the whole subject matter of vicious dogs and vicious dog attacks. It is probably the most comprehensive coroner's inquiry set of recommendations that has ever been produced. I thank the members of that coroner's jury for their hard work.

But of the lengthy list of recommendations covering a wide range of areas, there was not a single mention of breed bans as being an appropriate response, a meaningful response, an effective response to vicious dog attacks on kids or anybody else. And indeed every expert we heard from, every academic, every researcher, every veterinarian, every association and organization that has as part of its mandate, if not its full mandate, the dealing with dog behaviour and the response to bad behaviour, dangerous behaviour of dogs—there was simply no support for the breed ban.

Oh, at some point the government backroom folks, the whiz kids, whipped up one Professor Beck and we got to enjoy one sentence from this so-called Professor Beck who, for all I know, could be a professor of home economics at some university in the Midwestern United

States. I don't know. The government, in this incredible pile of expertise, research papers and documentation, comes up with one line from a Professor Beck, who apparently has been all over the map on this one. I suppose the Liberals would feel comfortable with an opinion like that, because it's so—

Interjection: That's what they like about it.

Mr. Kormos: Think about it. They've been all over the map, so I'm sure they would take some comfort in someone who's been all over the map on any given issue.

Look, New Democrats were very candid from the get-go. You show us scientific, empirical evidence and data that permit the conclusion that a breed ban is going to protect people from vicious dogs and we would have to seriously rethink our opposition to this bill. Make no mistake about it.

Indeed, you'll recall the very last presenter to the committee, a young engineer. Remember him? He approached this very scientifically. He's a scientist, an engineer. He thought it was a trick question, the question I asked him, and I'd had a good shot at him before that and he was going, "Oh, oh, what's going on here?" I said to him, "Look, if the data were different"—because he was opposed to a breed ban as a solution—"would your opinion be different?" He said yes, because, as an engineer, as a scientist, he knew that you have to have data, you have to have research and you have to have empirical evidence.

I want to take just a moment to commend the parliamentary assistant. I want his colleagues to know that the parliamentary assistant did not deviate from the script by even one word. This is what he's paid to do; I understand. The parliamentary assistant had to run with a rather unpleasant intellectual challenge here and appeared to be enjoying it. The only thing I begrudge on his behalf is that it's Michael Bryant who's getting all the press coverage; you know, the Toronto Star editorials. But when this legislation blows up in the government's face, trust me, Michael Bryant will be saying, "No, no. Go talk to Zimmer. He's the one who stickhandled it through committee." When this legislation tanks, when this legislation is, among other things, tossed out by the courts for any number of defects in its drafting, Bryant will be saying, "Don't talk to me. Here's Zimmer's phone number. Give Zimmer a call. Zimmer will be pleased to do an interview with you."

You see, success has a thousand parents; failure is always an orphan. Except in this case, Bryant covered his own back by having David Zimmer listed as the putative father, so that when all hell breaks loose, it will be, "Go talk to Zimmer." He'll be like the little boy who wet the bed. Bryant will be saying, "I don't know how that got there. Go talk to Zimmer."

Let's take a look at, as lawyers like Mr. Zimmer would say, *inter alia*. Lawyers like him like using words like that. Let's take a look at what the legislation doesn't do. One of the most consistent and impressive bits of evidence that all of us heard was that if we're going to be serious about responsible dog ownership, any dog that is

owned other than for the purpose of legitimate breeding or legitimate showing should be spayed or neutered. As I heard that, it sounded like an eminently smart, rational, reasonable, intelligent thing. I realized that because nobody denied the existence of badly bred dogs—nobody. That was the whole point.

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I was grateful that Julia Munro, the member for York North, was on the committee, because she has some special expertise and familiarity with the world of dogs and dog breeding, and she brought some real skills to the committee as a committee member. I'm pleased that she was there as part of this group. Nobody denies that there are badly bred dogs and that, yes, a badly bred dog can be a dangerous dog. And nobody denies that there is a renegade, outlaw community out there that likes their pit bull-type dogs—and we're going to get to that in just a minute, aren't we, Mr. Zimmer?—mean, vicious, tough and outsize any of the standards for showing etc.

That's the problem with this bill. It's one thing to say that you're going to ban a breed in a given community like Kitchener or even Brantford or Winnipeg. Ontario is a big province. My fear with this legislation is that those badly bred dogs, the dogs that are bred by outlaws and renegades and criminals to be meaner, tougher, stronger and more vicious than any other dog has ever been—my concern is that the bill won't eliminate the breeding of those dogs; it'll drive it out into the countryside where they're going to be bred even meaner, even less selectively and more dangerously, and they're going to be trained to be bad, bad dogs.

You read the news item just a couple days ago, a sad case of a woman whose dog started to show signs of real aggressive behaviour, so she took him to a dog behaviourist. You've seen in the movies where dog trainers, when they're training dogs to attack and so on, put the quilted covering on their arm. This fellow said that the minute he put that on, that dog just went berserk. We know what that means. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out. This fellow said, "This dog was not bred, but trained, to be mean and vicious."

One of the things we were fascinated with is this concept of responsible dog ownership. Quite frankly, if you spay and neuter every dog that isn't a registered show dog or a registered breeding dog, that addresses the issue in and of itself—end of story—and it creates a far healthier climate. I've told you about Charlie the beagle. Charlie the beagle lived with me for many, many years until his demise several years ago. My neighbour Miss Rosie is a cat person. I told Mr. Zimmer this: This government isn't going to dare take on cat owners, is it? My neighbour Miss Rosie is a cat person, and I'm not about to tell you how many cats she has, because every stray cat gets adopted. But she makes sure that every cat that comes into her household is neutered or spayed and is taken to the vet and has all of his or her shots. She is very careful about all those sorts of things. I'm using her as an example because I know her, and she's got cats.

So I introduced an amendment to the legislation that specifically said that pet dogs shall be neutered or

spayed. Dogs that aren't registered breeding dogs, that aren't registered show dogs—in other words, that aren't purebred dogs—shall be neutered or spayed. The government wanted nothing of it. Had you left the room on those frequent occasions when people were urging you to require that dogs other than show dogs and breeding dogs be neutered or spayed? Had you not heard any of those people? Did you not read any of the material that we got about the importance of having broad-based neutering and spaying laws and rules? The government wanted nothing to do with that proposition.

I found it interesting, because what we did learn in committee was that, under the Dog Owners' Liability Act, the enforcement out there is virtually nil. At the end of the day, although this is an ill-conceived effort to ban a purported breed, it still uses as its root the Dog Owners' Liability Act. The Dog Owners' Liability Act isn't being enforced now. That is part of the problem. Forget about pit bulls—I'm going to get to that in just a minute—it's about the fact that vicious dog attacks have been taking place in community after community across this province by dogs of all breeds, and the Dog Owners' Liability Act isn't being enforced with respect to those dogs. We heard specific cases where, had that legislation been enforced, a second attack—oh, and not by a pit bull in that one—could have been prevented. We heard more than one of those. What kind of sleight of hand or three-card monte is the government trying to play here?

I introduced an amendment that would make the owner of a dog that bites guilty of a provincial offence, just by virtue of the fact that the dog bit. That, I say to you, would go a long way toward getting the owner's attention, making sure that they leash their dog, making sure that they are careful about what kind of dog they buy and who they buy it from, making sure that they are careful about going to these dog training places, dog obedience schools and so on. If people knew that if their dog bites someone, they are going to be charged under the Provincial Offences Act, people would be a lot more careful about the kind of dog they buy, who they buy it from, how they train it and how they manage and control the dog. The government wanted no part of that. I thought, my goodness, because that was a recommendation that the Police Association of Ontario had said they found interesting. They didn't endorse it; I'm not trying to say that. They said that they found it very, very interesting.

We heard about the problem of dogs that bite, from any number of breeds, and the fact that most of the time the Dog Owners' Liability Act isn't being enforced. In many cases where you have a bad dog owner, you also have someone—what's the phrase? The lawyer, Mr. Zimmer, might tell me—who is inexorable, against whom a lawsuit is throwing good money after bad. You can get yourself a judgment, but it ain't worth the paper it's printed on because the people have no assets. Similarly, they're not likely to have the kind of household insurance.

So I said to the committee that, in view of the fact that we've been hearing this from folks all over and that these

dogs are dogs of all breeds, really, isn't it smarter, rather than saying that we're going to ban pit bulls—whatever that means, and I'm going to get to that in just a minute—to create some tough laws that get people's attention out there, people who own dogs and people who are careless about dog ownership or are less than responsible? The government wanted nothing to do with that.

I put to the government that, in view of the fact that they emulated the Kitchener bylaw—I put to them that, in Kitchener, purebred dogs of the Staffordshire breeds were exempted. The government wanted no part of that.

We put to the government that it had some serious problems with its definition of “pit bull.” There is what will become increasingly notorious videotape of an Attorney General of this province, the current Attorney General, in front of the chamber, television cameras rolling. The Attorney General was as cocky as could be, because his staff had briefed him on the photo lineup of the dogs. You remember the photo lineup?

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And the staff said, “Bryant, number 16, number 16.” If you tried that in a casino, you'd get busted. You know that, don't you? It's called cheating at play. They arrest people down in Niagara for that—in Bradford too, I bet you—for cheating at play. It's a specific Criminal Code offence if you try to cheat in a gaming casino. So the staff were going, “Bryant, number 16, number 16.” Bingo, right? So Bryant's out there: “Pick the pit bull.” Oh, yeah, in a New York minute. Boom, wrong. Sirens went off, bells started ringing, those awooga horns, flames encircled him, there were strobe lights flashing. This is the same Attorney General who said, “Well, if it barks like a pit bull, if it looks like a pit bull, if it smells like a pit bull, then it must be a pit bull.” He said, “Oh, a pit bull, that's easy. Everybody knows a pit bull.” That's what he said: “Everybody knows what a pit bull is. I do.” Oh, yeah, sure.

Mr. Dunlop: Number 16.

Mr. Kormos: Number 16, yes—B16. No bingo, I'm afraid. It was one of those “Whoops” moments. We have other phrases for them too, but, trust me, that's really unparliamentary language. It's the “Whoops, I just stepped in it” moment.

Look at what the government has done. The interesting thing is, the Staffordshire bull terrier is included in the list of dogs to be banned. It's the British nanny dog. It's the dog that has a cleaner record than any member of this chamber. When you go to all these guides—people with kids or no kids; you need a lot of exercise; the little lap dog thing—it's the dog that the books say, “If you've got kids, go with the nanny dog. Go with the Staffordshire terrier.” Here is a dog whose characteristics include even temper, good with kids, can be trusted, blah, blah, blah. In second reading, we learned that the chihuahua was not recommended with kids because it's a biter, it's a snapper. Those little fox terrier kind of dogs, the little ratting dogs—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: OK. You've got to be careful around those. But the Staffordshire terrier, the nanny dog, no. Bingo. That is bingo. That's the dog you want if you've got kids.

So the government is banning the Staffordshire terrier—talk about stepping in it—but furthermore, it is using the Staffordshire terrier as a reference point for what a pit bull is. You have to take a look at “pit bull,” because there is no such thing as a capital-P pit bull. There is no such breed as pit bull. It includes “a dog that has an appearance and physical characteristics that are ... similar to those of dogs” like American Staffordshire terriers or Staffordshire bull terriers. This is the irony: A dog is a pit bull by virtue of being similar to one of the most peaceful dogs that's ever been bred. That's pretty weird stuff. That's downright flaky.

Realizing that you've got this serious problem of defining pit bulls, you then go to what will be—I call this when you pass the laughter threshold—the yuk-yuk section of the bill. This is the one that's going to have people rolling in the aisles.

Mr. Dunlop: The Chris Rock version.

Mr. Kormos: That's right. This is the Chris Rock section of the bill. People will be wetting themselves with laughter. How are you going to prove a dog is a so-called pit bull now? You're going to have a document signed by a veterinarian “stating that a dog is a pit bull within the meaning of this act.” Well, wait a minute, guys. I don't know for sure, but from what I've read about expert evidence, a person who is an expert can only give evidence in his or her field of expertise. So understand what section 19 does: A signature of a veterinarian stating that a dog is a pit bull within the meaning of the act; in other words, that artifice, that artificiality created in the definition section in section 1, which requires legal interpretation. Well, then you're going to have vets being called upon to give expertise not just in veterinary medicine but in law as well. You're going to have vets lined up in provincial offences courts, sitting on witness benches. Remember Arlo Guthrie and the Group W bench? You're going to have vets sitting on the Group W bench waiting for trials that are never going to happen, because you guys have generated increased backlogs in our provincial offences courts. For every vet who says, “Oh, yeah, I think this dog is a pit bull,” there's going to be a vet who says, “Are you nuts? You don't know your ear from a hole in the ground if you think that dog is a pit bull. That dog's a collie or a Shih Tzu or a beagle or—

Mr. Dunlop: A Jack Russell terrier.

Mr. Kormos: —“Jack Russell terrier.”

Look, I said this in committee—it's just a neat phrase, so I'll say it again—I come to this debate without any anthropomorphic sentimentality; I don't. The problem is that Rin Tin Tin, for people of my age, endeared German shepherds to my generation, even though a German shepherd is capable of being a pretty aggressive dog and a pretty darn scary one.

Mr. Dunlop: The same as that scary Old Yeller.

Mr. Kormos: Old Yeller, again.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Lassie.

Mr. Kormos: Lassie and Timmy. Then you've got the Disney dogs. You have the Dalmatians and the little schnauzer dog and things like this. The bull terrier? That's the one in the Victrola ad sitting patiently in front of the megaphone of the old record player, waiting for his master's voice. The government got itself caught up in a little hamster wheel here from which there was no dignified escape. In the course of that, the Attorney General has shown himself to be nothing more than a mere saltimbanco.

I regret that this exercise is doomed to failure. The reason I regret that is because there's so much that could be done to make this province safer when it comes to people and dogs. There are so many good, positive things that could be done. Unfortunately, there are going to be so many darn resources that are being deflected and re-directed and distracted, scarce resources—I admit that—that are going to be redirected to this elusive hunt for pit bulls. I tell you, to try to effect a ban across the province isn't just downright, plain naive. No, it's stupid.

People have been pleading with you: "Go after bad dogs of every breed." There are ways to do it. There has been a whole lot of study done on the subject matter, a whole lot of research done. Listen to the people who know. Listen to the smart people. Listen to the researchers. Listen to the animal behaviourists. Listen to the veterinarians who deal with dogs of all breeds day after day after day. Don't listen to some overly paid little backroom whiz kid who concocted banning pit bulls as a little bit of diversionary politics because you guys are tanking in the polls.

You banned sushi; oh, yes, that one flew. You banned nurses; you did do that. Eight hundred of them were banned from the province of Ontario. They lost their jobs. You banned OHIP coverage for chiropractors; you banned OHIP coverage for physiotherapists; you banned affordable auto insurance premiums when you rolled over and caved to your friends in the for-profit auto insurance industry with \$4.2 billion in new profits in the last 12 months. You rolled over for your corporate friends, but I tell you, you've done a disservice to potential victims: kids—we know they're going to be kids. Kids get bit more than adults do; it's as simple as that. Some of them are going to be bit real bad. God forbid, there may well be kids bitten to death. None of us look forward to that.

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I implore government backbenchers to stand up and vote against this bill, because you know it's the right thing to do. I'm not sure, but I have a feeling that today five people are going to stand to force a division. I have a feeling that today it just might happen. I'm not sure, because you can never be sure until it's done and over with, but it might just happen.

Let's understand that this is far too dangerous a matter to play with, to toy with. New Democrats are going to be voting against this bill because it isn't the way to address the problem of vicious and bad dogs; it isn't the way to

protect kids and other members of our provincial community from being bitten and mauled by dogs; and indeed it creates a dangerous diversion of scarce financial resources. I tell you, the purported pit bull ban that this bill says it's going to create is of little comfort to the kid who is then mauled by a bad dog of another breed. We should be looking at bad dogs in general, and their owners. The folly of breed-specific bans has been recognized as such only too late in so many other jurisdictions. Why do we have to be lagging in this regard as well? Thank you kindly.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: Mr. Speaker, I am up for further debate and I'm trying to just figure out how much time we have, because I gather the time that appears on the clock is not correct. That is what the government whip is indicating to me.

Interjection.

Ms. Martel: OK. Why don't you give me eight or 10 minutes, and then I'll be done.

Interjection: Sure.

Ms. Martel: I want to make a couple of comments. I said earlier that I did have a chance to speak on second reading. I had really encouraged the government at that time—and I think if people take a look at my remarks they will see that—to bring forward all of the evidence, all of the information, all of the expertise that was necessary to show that a breed-specific ban would work, and then I might actually consider supporting the government's legislation. But as I look through what happened at the committee, as I listen to those who sat through it for the four days, I can tell you that that didn't happen. I just want to make a couple of points, because there is just no way I can support this bill.

Let me start from something close to home. This is a Sudbury Star article from October 28, 2004—sorry, it was in the Barrie Examiner, but it relates to Sudbury:

"Canine Attack Puts Boy in Hospital.

"A young boy from Sudbury was rushed to Toronto by his family on Wednesday after being badly bitten by a dog in a city park. Two-year-old Sebastien Leriche was playing in the park with his brother at about 11 a.m. when the attack occurred, said Melanie Pella, the boy's aunt. The children were petting a leashed black Lab that was being walked by a woman, Pella said. "The dog was friendly at first and then it got irritated or something and snapped at my nephew."

Will the legislation that the government wants to pass do anything for this two-year-old? I can tell you, no, it won't, because he wasn't attacked by a pit bull, whatever a pit bull is—and there was lots of expertise before the committee that there isn't a "pit bull" that you can define; there are all kinds of different breeds. This young child was attacked by a black Lab. That's my concern.

I thought the point of the exercise was to protect public safety. I thought the point of the exercise here was to ban dangerous dogs, was to deal with dangerous dogs so that children and adults wouldn't have to be worried about being attacked by a dangerous dog: a Rottweiler, if it was that, today; a German shepherd, if it was that,

today; a black Lab, if it was that, today. Regrettably, the government's legislation doesn't do that.

The government, I regret to say, because they thought it would be a political sell, focused on pit bulls because there had been an attack in August that was very well-publicized, that horrified everybody. I guess the government thought that if they could focus on pit bulls, they could let the public think they were actually doing something about dangerous dogs, and that's not the case. The two-year-old from Sudbury wasn't attacked by a pit bull. If he were attacked tomorrow, would this legislation change anything? No, it wouldn't, because the dangerous dog in question was a black Lab.

We should have used this legislation and this opportunity to bring forward a bill that would have dealt with all kinds of dangerous dogs, and that would have dealt with irresponsible dog owners, because if we had done that, we probably would have done something about public safety. I regret that the Attorney General, I guess, got his back against the wall and decided he was only going to be dealing with pit bulls. It didn't matter who came forward to the public hearings, what experts, how those experts dealt with dogs, the behaviour of dogs—anybody who came forward to say, "If you really want to do something, look at all dangerous dogs," was just dismissed out of hand. I don't understand it. I don't understand why the government didn't use this opportunity to bring in legislation that we could have supported, that would have truly protected the public.

Maybe the Attorney General got his back up against the wall, because he went out and said, "We're going to do something about pit bulls," even though he can't even identify a pit bull himself. We let an opportunity go where we could have truly dealt with dangerous dogs, regardless of breed—dangerous dogs of any breed—and we could have dealt with irresponsible dog owners.

I just want to look at Sudbury again in the short time that I have. Is there a problem with pit bulls in Sudbury? Not if you look at the statistics in the health unit. If you look at the statistics in the health unit at the end of September 2004, there were 117 reported dog bites in the city. "Of that number, six were reported to be pit bulls," said Bud O'Donnell, manager of environmental health. German shepherd and German shepherd-mixes accounted for 12 incidents." Other breeds included black Labs, Rottweilers and even—I don't know how this happened—a kangaroo. But six out of 117 involved pit bulls. What are we doing about all the rest of those dangerous dogs?

One of the people who came before the committee said, "If you really wanted to do something about dangerous dogs, you could deal with those recommendations from the Courtney Trempe inquest." I gather that of the 35 recommendations that were made, and they were all very good recommendations, only 10 have even been implemented. What about the other 25 that we should have been implementing through this legislation to really do something about dangerous dogs, to really do something about irresponsible pets, to really do something about public safety?

In conclusion, let me just say that I had urged the government at second reading, "Bring forward all the experts, bring forward the information, bring forward the evidence to show me that a breed-specific ban would work and I will be there supporting the legislation." It didn't happen. The experts that came said over and over again that a breed-specific ban doesn't work, but the government wasn't interested in hearing that. The government certainly wasn't interested in hearing about recommendations to deal with dangerous dogs or irresponsible dog owners. I regret to say that we're going to have a piece of legislation that tomorrow afternoon, after this passes, isn't going to do very much at all, if anything, to deal with dangerous dogs and public safety.

I don't know what the Attorney General is going to do when there is another dog attack that's really serious and it doesn't involve a pit bull but involves a black Lab, for example, like the black Lab that attacked a two-year-old in a city park in Sudbury. I don't know what the Attorney General is going to do then. I wouldn't want to be in his shoes.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the speeches by the NDP caucus members.

I'd like to go over a couple of the facts. I know this bill is going to pass tomorrow; it's going to pass without any of the amendments that the NDP or the Progressive Conservative members made. I know that overwhelmingly, in my riding and across this province, we received literally thousands and thousands of complaints about this piece of legislation. Very few e-mails or letters supported it. I can tell you that it's probably a disaster waiting to happen as the Attorney General moves forward with this.

First of all, there was very little consultation on the bill. Second, the Attorney General brought forward this bill, my understanding is, without the knowledge of the House leader. It wasn't to be dealt with this fall at all, but he thought it was an opportunity to make himself look good. What gets me, in this era of democratic renewal, is when the minister responsible for democratic renewal brings forward legislation and does not allow one single amendment by the PC or NDP members of this House. That doesn't say much for a minister of democratic renewal.

Another comment: I always thought it was interesting, as the member for Niagara Centre mentioned, that the minister couldn't identify the breed-specific dog they were referring to today. I thank CityPulse and Alex Pierson for that. That was a good piece of reporting, as far as I'm concerned. I think it's important that we acknowledge the media. The media has not supported the government in this legislation.

One thing that came to my attention, and this is for the Attorney General: At the end of every leash, there is a voter.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Are there any other honourable members who wish to reply? No reply.

Are there any other honourable members who wish to speak? Being none—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Can I have two minutes?

The Deputy Speaker: It's a little late. Oh, I'm sorry—to speak to the bill.

Mr. Murdoch: Just for two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: No, the two-minuters are done. I've asked if there are any other members who wish to speak to the bill.

Mr. Murdoch: No, I won't do that. I thought I'd have two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: No, you missed that.

Mr. Bryant has moved third reading of Bill 132. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I think I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have been handed, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr. Bryant for third reading of Bill 132 be deferred until Tuesday, March 1, 2005.

Mr. Murdoch: At what time?

The Deputy Speaker: It will be during routine proceedings. I have nothing further to add today. Minister?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1752.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
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Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)



Tuesday 1 March 2005

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report entitled *Looking Forward: The Environment Bill of Rights*, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): As you know, February was Black History Month, and I rise today to acknowledge the events and projects that commemorate black history in Owen Sound.

Emancipation Day, August 1, 1834, has been celebrated in Owen Sound since August 1862 by holding an emancipation celebration picnic in Harrison Park. I remember that you, Mr. Speaker, have attended this picnic a number of times.

Owen Sound was the most northerly point for the Underground Railway, offering a safe haven for the slaves fleeing from the southern states.

Chair Dennis Scott and his committee have been holding this picnic for many years to "inform, educate, recognize and celebrate those individuals and groups who made the Underground Railway journey possible."

On July 31, 2004, I had the pleasure of attending the unveiling of the black history cairn in Harrison Park. The cairn is an interactive monument allowing visitors to approach the site and have a sense of shelter and protection. It's located on the banks the Sydenham River on a parcel of land donated by the city of Owen Sound.

Councillor Peter Lemon and Bonita Johnson-de Matteis partnered with several organizations in Grey county to construct a monument that could be identified with the Underground Railway. It also recognizes the contributions of early black settlers to Grey county and the city of Owen Sound.

I would encourage all members and their families to visit Harrison Park in Owen Sound and view this wonderful symbol of freedom. The Emancipation Day picnic will be held on July 30, 2005.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I would like to share with the House a letter that made its way to my desk a few days ago. It was addressed to Premier McGuinty, and it was signed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario president, Roger Anderson. In it he states:

"AMO and Ontario's municipalities stand with you for a fair share of national health and education funding, a fair share of social services funding, a fair share of infrastructure investment and a fair share of funding to support the successful settlement and integration of immigrants in our communities."

He goes on to say, "Ontario's municipalities understand all too well the implications of fiscal imbalances. As you know, Ontario's municipal governments have been trying to manage their own affairs in the face of a massive structural fiscal imbalance created by the previous government of Ontario."

Like the provincial government and health organizations across Ontario, AMO wants a fair share for Ontario. Like Ontario, AMO and its members are proud of Ontario's tradition of being a provider for those regions that are less fortunate than we are.

AMO understands that Ontario gives \$23 billion more in taxes than it receives from the federal government. There is a huge disparity in Ontario in funding for post-secondary education and immigration as compared to what other provinces receive, and these disparities must be addressed. It's now time for the federal government to understand that Ontario needs its fair share so that we can continue to be an economic powerhouse for the rest of the country.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House in response to an article by John Spears in the *Toronto Star* that indicates that the chief executive officer of Hydro One has received a 35% increase in compensation. The increase brings the salary and income of the CEO to almost \$1.5 million.

As MPP for Durham, a riding in the region known for being the powerhouse of Ontario, I recognize the valuable work done by the staff of OPG and Hydro One. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that Hydro One is provincially owned and that Ontario citizens, the

taxpayers, are the shareholders. We must remember that all costs incurred by Hydro One contribute ultimately to the bill paid for by the pensioners, the hard-working families, the farmers, the large and small business people of Ontario—the taxpayers. I would like to remind the government that it has an obligation to monitor the expenses of Ontario Hydro with this in mind.

Compensation for senior officials is one part of that obligation. My concern is that this increase of 35% for the CEO's compensation will filter its way down through the entire organization, eventually to the taxpayer. This must not be allowed to happen. I am confident, as a member of the official opposition, that we will carefully monitor future compensation and indeed all spending, not just at Ontario Hydro but all public spending in the province of Ontario.

COINS FROM CARING KIDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On February 17, I attended a very special event that highlighted what happens when you have Hamilton's children, youth and agencies working together for a great cause. The Coins from Caring Kids program started with Donna Quigley and Joan Browning, two women who wanted to engage young people in the collection of coins for the Red Cross and tsunami relief. In no time, these two Hamilton residents had our entire city on board, including the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, the Hamilton Catholic board, Mohawk College, Hamilton Police Services, every school and student, their families and teachers.

Young people contributed coins they earned doing odd jobs or that they found under cushions, in their piggy banks and in their pockets. Police and volunteers collected and counted mountains of coins. So successful was the drive that police brought in Brinks security, who volunteered and delivered the massive load.

Everyone reached out and made a difference, especially Hamilton's caring kids. They raised a truly amazing sum of \$204,346.56 in just a few weeks. It's a contribution that will be felt a world away, helping survivors and the affected nations recover and rebuild. To me, there's no better symbol than this program to illustrate the spirit of Hamilton and what it's all about.

1340

I'd like to thank and acknowledge Joan Browning and Donna Quigley, Hamilton Police Chief Brian Mullan, PC Scott Moreton, PC Scott Mahler, police services volunteers Isabel Scozzaro and Donna Knight, Susan Lennox of the Red Cross, and all the others who made this program the pride of Hamilton.

SENECA COLLEGE ANIMATION ARTS CENTRE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): It's with great pride that I rise today to recognize the very talented faculty and students at Seneca College school of com-

munication arts; namely, the chair, Jed DeCory, animation coordinator Larry DeFlorio, and graduates Paul Kohut, Jeff Panko, Sebastien Kapijimpanga and Dave Bachelor for their contribution to Chris Landreth's animated short film *Ryan*. It was the winner of the Academy Award for the best animated short this past Sunday night.

It never occurred to me when I viewed this 14-minute film while touring the college's new animation arts centre last June that I was watching an award-winning Oscar production. But these talented people have surprised all of us and have taken the community by storm with their tribute to fellow animator Ryan Larkin, who has fallen on very difficult times and is living in a Montreal shelter.

These students and faculty have shown the world that when it comes to cutting-edge digital art and film production, Canadian and Toronto professionals and students from Ontario at Seneca College are the best in the world. The winning of this Oscar has brought Seneca's animation arts program its due recognition and respect as a program of excellence. Educating students for 10 years, Seneca College's program has seen its graduates go on to work in other blockbuster films: *The Matrix*, *Spiderman*, the *Harry Potter* films, *Gladiator* and other leading films.

We should all be very, very proud of the contribution that these students have made to Ontario.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Over the next week, thousands of rural Ontarians will be arriving on the doorstep of a government that has turned its back on them. I'm reminded of the words of Helen Keller, who said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." As this government is about to discover, farmers and rural people are not alone.

When farmers suffer, everyone around them is affected. Small businesses go under; schools, hospitals and churches feel the effect. As OFA president Ron Bonnett said, "Farm incomes have been devastated by the BSE crisis, poor crop conditions, trade actions, record low crop prices, rising energy costs and a crushing regulatory and legislative burden initiated by the Ontario government." Mix in unfair property tax assessments and unaccountable bureaucracy, and you have a rural farm and non-farm alliance.

Rural protests and tractor rallies are not new. Think of the 2001 cash crop crisis. There was a 12-mile tractor parade in Winchester. Back in 1969, tractors arrived here at Queen's Park, which resulted in the Challenge of Abundance report.

Farmers are asking again, "Where is the plan?" They're fighting back. After empty Liberal promises, rural Ontario is fighting back. See you all on March 2 and March 9. There is an alliance.

I will mention the that Lanark Landowners are here today in the members' gallery: Randy Hillier, John Vanderspank and other members of the Lanark Landowners.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I rise today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to agriculture. Since coming into government, we have taken a number of steps to improve the state of agriculture in Ontario. One of the most important things we've done is provide assistance to help farmers deal with the fallout of BSE. We have delivered \$410 million of federal-provincial funding for farmers and industry affected by mad cow disease, and we're working to restore a fully open border with the United States. In addition, we've invested increasing abattoir capacity for older animals. We've also hammered out a better deal on the agricultural policy framework with the federal government in order to ensure the financial health of the industry. We've hosted the first-ever Premier's summit on agri-food in order to develop a common vision for the future of the agri-food sector in Ontario.

We've done all this because agriculture is a huge part of this province's economy. It represents 12% of all goods produced in Ontario and more than one in 10 jobs in this province.

To ensure that the agricultural industry continues to play a large role in Ontario's economy, this government is committed to providing the support that the sector needs. This will always be a challenge, there are always challenges to face, but by working together, we can make Ontario's agriculture and food sector the envy of the world. And remember, if you ate today, thank a farmer.

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): The McGuinty government fully supports Ontario farmers and our strong agri-foods industry. Our government's commitment to a new \$6-million agricultural drainage program will enhance rural infrastructure by helping agricultural landowners and rural municipalities cover the costs of drainage infrastructure.

The recent record low prices for grain and oilseed crops have resulted in difficult times for Ontario producers. Our government will deliver the \$94 million remaining in the MRI fund to producers before spring planting. As well, we are working with the grains and oilseeds sector to develop and implement solutions that will make this industry sustainable.

Our government is providing up to \$25 million in transitional funds over three years to assist processors in meeting the new, stronger standards for meat safety in Ontario. We are providing \$20 million to assist Ontario's large livestock operators to cover the cost of the requirements of the nutrient management regulation. Up to \$396.5 million of federal and provincial funding for farmers and industry affected by mad cow disease will be delivered. The Ontario government is supporting farmers by providing funding for deadstock collection and increasing domestic slaughter capacity.

The McGuinty government understands the issues facing Ontario's farmers and our agri-food industry. We are working hard every day with our partners to build a strong and viable rural Ontario.

FIREFIGHTER AND POLICE
BRAVERY AWARDS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): This past Friday, February 25, 2005, I had the opportunity to attend a special ceremony here at Queen's Park, hosted by the province of Ontario, which recognized 10 firefighters and 10 police officers with medals of bravery for their heroic efforts. These medals are the province's highest honour, in recognition of firefighters and police officers whose actions demonstrate outstanding courage and bravery in the line of duty.

It is with great honour that I have the opportunity to acknowledge the bravery and courage of two firefighters and one police officer from the riding of Northumberland. Constable Christopher Garrett of the Cobourg Police Service was the recipient of the 2004 Ontario Medal for Police Bravery. On May 15, 2004, Constable Christopher Garrett was fatally wounded while responding to a robbery call. Constable Garrett, although seriously wounded, was able to pursue the attacker. The extraordinary, heroic actions of Constable Garrett saved the lives of other police officers and citizens. I offer my congratulations, my deepest gratitude and my sympathy to Constable Garrett's family.

The 2003 Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery was presented to firefighters Kory Hietala and Mike Jacques of Brighton District Fire Department. In March 2003, Brighton firefighters Kory and Mike risked their lives to retrieve a man from a vehicle which had been driven into a burning house, in spite of the great risk involved.

Once again, I offer my congratulations to all 20 medal recipients and express my sincere thanks for their courageous dedication and support for all our communities.

VISITORS

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Page Victoria Bragues's mom, brothers, sisters and best friends are in the members' gallery today. On behalf of Mr. McMeekin and myself, I'd like to welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

1350

ERNIE EVES

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the House adjourn during pleasure and that Ernie Eves, former Premier and MPP for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, be invited on to the floor, and following remarks of up to five minutes from each recognized party that he be permitted to address the assembled members for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

I now adjourn the House during pleasure.

Mr. Eves was accompanied into the chamber.

The Speaker: I invite Mr. Eves to be seated on the floor.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It is my pleasure to rise and pay tribute on behalf of the people of Ontario to our friend and colleague Ernie Eves.

Ernie, first of all, welcome back to this House. Welcome back to the chamber you entered for the first time in 1981, fresh from your six-vote-margin landslide victory in the riding of Parry Sound. Welcome back to the place where you left your mark over the course of almost 24 years of public service. It is good to see you here again.

Former British Prime Minister Edward Heath once said, "If politicians lived on praise and thanks, they'd be forced into some other line of business." I think all of us in this chamber can identify with that sentiment. After all, there are many places where you can earn much more money than you do in Ontario Legislature, and there are many careers that offer more recognition and more opportunities for praise. But there are very few places where someone can do more good for more people than in this House. And I know for certain, Ernie, you agree with that statement.

Just a moment ago, I referred to Ernie Eves as our "friend and colleague." I used those words advisedly. While Ernie and I have clashed over many issues over many years, he has throughout made it clear to me that his motivation was always the same: a sincere desire to do what he believed was right for his party and the people of Ontario.

His actions as a politician have reflected his profound understanding that there is a line in politics which separates vigorous debate, something which enlarges all of us, and personal acrimony, something which diminishes all of us. Ernie always stayed on the right side of that line. So it makes it easy for us on this side of the House to call him more than just a colleague; he is our friend.

I recall in particular, shortly after the last election, receiving Ernie's phone call inviting me to meet with him as part of the transition process. At that meeting, he was gracious and most helpful at a time which for him surely must have been very difficult. He offered sound advice—the kind of advice that only a Premier could offer—and he made it clear that I should feel free to call upon him if he could be of any further help to me in carrying out my new responsibilities. Ernie Eves was as classy in defeat as he was in his many victories.

For more than 20 years, as Premier, as a minister and as an MPP, Ernie Eves tirelessly served the people of Ontario, and he did so with the strength of his convictions, with good humour and with an unwavering love for his province.

Mr. Eves's career has been a testament to public service: public service in good political times and challenging ones, public service in government and in opposition, public service before a private career and after one. But perhaps the greatest measure of the man's commitment to Ontario and the greatest measure of his

personal courage was his continuing public service in the face of great personal loss. It's a lesson the members on all sides of this House would do well to draw upon whenever we are dealt a blow by fate. It's a privilege to lead one's party and an honour to lead one's province, but to lead one's peers by courageous example is the truest form of leadership.

As our 23rd Premier, Ernie Eves enjoyed the privilege of leading this great province. It was an honour he embraced with his whole being. Although he could only serve for a short time before he was compelled to call an election, he faced more than his share of challenges. In fact, as Premier, Ernie saw this province through some of the most difficult and demanding times in recent history. He faced the SARS crisis and the blackout of 2003 with quiet confidence and courage—the mark of a true leader—and he conducted himself at all times with a manner and a decorum that enlarged the office he held and the province he served.

Ernie's commitment to serving the public continues. He acts as an adviser for the Justin Eves Foundation, which helps learning disabled youth working toward post-secondary education. His commitment to his family—his life partner, Isabel, and his daughter, Natalie—is total. Isabel has our admiration. She herself knows only too well the cost of political life, the slings and arrows, the compromised family time.

I extend a special thank you to Natalie for sharing her father with the people of Ontario for so long.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I speak from personal experience. There is just no way around it; some important times together just weren't possible because of Natalie's father's public responsibilities. We are very grateful for the time he devoted to his province and the love and support that you gave him while he worked for others.

Stephen Lewis, on the occasion of his retirement from this very Legislature in 1977, said, "The surest route to affection and esteem is defeat and retirement." If that is the rule, then you, Ernie Eves, are the exception, for you have long had our affection and our esteem. On behalf of all Ontarians, I thank you. Thank you for over two decades of public service. Thank you for coming here and doing good. I wish you and your family the very best the future has to offer.

Applause.

1400

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): What a pleasure and privilege it is for me to pay tribute to Ernie Eves from the Progressive Conservative caucus of Ontario and to pay tribute to Isabel and Natalie as well.

I first learned of Ernie's victory when I was sitting in the caucus room here—I guess it was March or April 1981. March seems to be a good time for elections for Progressive Conservatives.

We're back on the topic, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Are you resigning, Norm?

Mr. Sterling: If I got this kind of treatment, I might.

Although Ernie Eves won his first election by six votes, I want to assure everyone that in each subsequent election, and I think there were eight of them, he won by much larger pluralities. That was because the people knew that he was not only busy here at Queen's Park, but that he was busy representing his constituents—and represent his constituents he did.

When he first came here in 1981, after the recount, he became parliamentary assistant to Bette Stephenson, the then Minister of Education. That developed into a long, lifetime friendship, as well as a professional political relationship.

When Frank Miller became Premier in 1985, Ernie was appointed Minister of Community and Social Services. Both of his first two appointments were in the area of social services, and I think that has related to a part of his character that perhaps didn't shine when he became finance minister. But his first and most passionate belief was to care for people who couldn't care for themselves.

From 1985 to 1995, of course, we were sitting in opposition, and while that has a lot of detrimental impacts on politicians, it also had some good impacts on those of us who were sitting in opposition at that time. Ernie worked with Mike Harris, myself and a small caucus, 16 of us, from 1987 to 1990 to put the party in a comeback position. From working with Mike as the House leader and Ernie as the whip, I can tell you that these two gentlemen knew what they were doing in this Legislature as opposition members.

Part of the beauty of sitting in opposition for Ernie at that time, from 1990 to 1995, was his ability to see his son more frequently, who was being educated in Boston. He had a learning disability that couldn't be satisfied in our province or in our country. I talked with Ernie on many occasions as he was preparing to go down to see his son on the weekend or in a time when the Legislature was off.

In retrospect, Ernie, I always think that, given the circumstances that followed and the very terrible tragedy in 1995, in some ways it was a godsend that we were in opposition during that period of time so you could spend more time with Justin. Of course we know that in 1995 Justin perished in a terrible automobile accident. I can never forget going to Parry Sound for the funeral and the strength with which Ernie held his family together, and particularly how he showed his love to Natalie during that period of time.

From 1995 until he retired the first time around, Ernie served as our finance minister. When he became finance minister, he was given a job to do, and, as I talked with Mike Harris this morning, he did it with great skill and adaptability. In addition to dropping the annual deficit in the province by \$3 billion in the very first part-year we were here in government, he worked that deficit down until we had a number of balanced budgets before he left the post. As well, I think some of the hallmarks of his budgets that were forgotten about were that he took hundreds of thousands of low-income earners off the income tax payroll of this province and that he also gave

additional child benefits to people in this province so that they could afford daycare. Ernie, either in cabinet or in his decision-making, always would do the right thing, often at some political peril.

Gerry Phillips, in the tribute he kindly put forward at our leadership convention, on stage—it was a film of Gerry—said, "I'm going to talk about the serious part." He did a lot of funny things too, Gerry. It was very, very much appreciated. Gerry said that Ernie Eves set the role model for ministers to work with opposition members when he was a minister. If an opposition member stood up in this House and asked the minister a question about an individual or a problem, instead of parroting back an answer, often Ernie would say, "I will see to it, I will meet with that person, I will deal with that problem and we will find a resolution to that particular problem." I think that says a huge amount for him.

I also think that his compassion was shown in terms of what happened after the tragic death of Justin, in the setting up of the Justin Eves Foundation. Ernie, along with his friends and his political allies—Bob Rae serves on that board; Bette Stephenson serves on that board—gathered money for individuals who had learning disabilities like his son, Justin. I believe they've helped over 130 individuals who could not get satisfaction from our public education system at the present time.

Ernie gave up a tremendous amount to come back to public life and run and be our Premier. So I think we owe him a great deal of gratitude for that decision. He came back to a difficult situation. No one denies that, Ernie. I, who have had a little bit of experience in here, know of the many challenges that you did face.

I also want to talk about his staff. I think he had the same constituency staff person for all of the time he represented Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know of the loyalty of his staff in this area.

Ernie, in spite of your sometimes outwardly sombre expression when you were in public—and I think that is due to shyness more than anything else, quite frankly. As Hugh Mackenzie has explained to me, he is actually very humorous in his own right. He is a great guy to be with and a great guy to play golf with—as long as he gives you a lot of strokes.

I know that he is very proud of his daughter, Natalie, who has just recently graduated in veterinary medicine and is setting up, I believe, in Parry Sound. Ernie has recently been working with her to get her on her way. But I know that during the period of time after the loss of Justin, Natalie was a tremendous strength to Ernie in carrying forward. She is a beautiful young lady, and I know that Ernie was most happy in the celebration of her marriage in the last year.

Lastly, Ernie and I agree on most things, or have agreed on most things. We are, I guess, in the same area of the political spectrum. But I do want to remind Ernie of a resolution in this House that I put forward in, I think it was, July 1992. Ernie, I think I did you a great favour, because I put forward resolution number 22 on July 23, 1992, which said that in the opinion of this House, the

Senate of Canada should be abolished. I want everybody in this House to know that I voted in favour of my resolution. But I want everybody in this House to know that he voted against the resolution.

Anyway, he has stayed consistent. He has been a great leader in our party, a great finance minister and a great Premier. Ernie, thank you. Thank you, Natalie; thank you, Isabel. Thank you for sharing so much of his time with us in public life. You've done a great job, and we wish you all the best in the future. Thanks very much, Ernie.

1410

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to say a few words about our colleague Ernie Eves. Indeed, there is much one can say about Ernie Eves. Someone who has been elected eight times over 24 years: that by itself is something quite incredible. Perhaps 2% or 3% of the members of the Legislature will ever be able to claim that kind of record. To also be Minister of Community and Social Services, Minister of Finance, government House leader, leader of the Conservative Party, Premier of Ontario and the Leader of the Opposition is an incredible record.

There are many people who will remember Ernie Eves in different ways. I'm not sure Ernie knows this, but I will always remember him as by far the most effective opposition questioner in the Legislature between 1990 and 1995, the days when I came to the Legislature saying under my breath, "Please, God, let him ask somebody else today," because Ernie was a fierce questioner and he was always on his feet, able to take whatever you gave in your initial answer and turn it back against you in the supplementary.

Many will always remember him as "Landslide Ernie," who was elected on election night with 10 votes and who, after the judicial review, won by six votes. That in itself, I think, is some kind of record. Still others will remember him as the perennially best-dressed member of the Legislature: always dapper, never a hair out of place, always with the stylish ties and everything that went with it. Still others will be heard to say for many years, "Where did he get that tan?" Ernie, you'll have to let us in on some of these facts at some point in time.

I think many of us have experienced some of the highs and lows for Ernie Eves. I always felt that the job he most enjoyed was Minister of Finance. It seemed to me, knowing you as I did from 1987 until 1995, that it was the job that seemed to naturally fit you. I remember how as Minister of Finance you seemed so unflappable, so confident, always seemingly in control of events, no matter how fierce our questions were. I remember as well the lows. As one of those who attended the funeral of your son Justin, I remember the obvious pain and the obvious hurt that you had to overcome.

I think it's a real test that, whether through the highs or the lows, you always conducted yourself in the same way. I remember fierce arguments when, after those arguments, you would politely say, "Good question

today." I remember equally fierce arguments when, at the end of the exchange, you would say, "Gotcha." I think that the real test is that you conducted yourself in the way that I believe all members of the Legislature would want to conduct themselves and indeed ought to conduct themselves, and you did it for 24 years.

Many people outside this place probably would never understand the stamina, the energy, the commitment and the dedication that is required to go through eight elections, to serve at a time when the Conservative Party was unpopular everywhere—and I certainly remember that time: I remember seeing some of the polling results following the Mulroney government, when virtually no one wanted to have the word "Conservative" written after their name. Ernie, you served through that. You have served at the most difficult of times, and you have served during some of the best of times.

I remember a reception for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip down at Ontario Place, when I think Ernie had just presented his fourth or fifth budget. I was standing beside him, and I said, "Ernie, you're lucky." And he responded to me, "Sh; don't tell the media." I think he understood what I was getting at; I think he was saying to me, "Touché. You may feel this way, but the media doesn't agree with you, Hampton."

Ernie, we obviously wish you the very best. From those of us who hardly ever agreed with you on an issue in principle, we wish you the very best. I say, in respect of your stamina, your dedication and your energy, that obviously you did something right; otherwise, why would people elect you and re-elect you and re-elect you over 24 years and eight elections? You obviously understood that your constituents, at the end of the day, were the most important people, and I think that's reflected in the results.

So we wish you the very best, and we—all of us—sincerely mean that. Whether Mr. Sterling's private member's resolution may or may not have something to do with your future, we wish you the best. We thank you for the service to the people of Ontario. We thank you for your service to the people who have served in the Legislature and for setting a personal example for all of us.

The Speaker: Mr. Eves.

Mr. Ernie Eves: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that a lot of you had hoped that you had seen the last of me in this place, but here I am. You may have noticed over my 24 years of service that I very seldom seem to do anything the easy way. A few little tidbits of knowledge: Even my birth, perhaps, was not an easy thing either, according to my mother. I was born in the middle of a tornado in Windsor, Ontario, on June 17, 1946. Perhaps that explains some of the difficult circumstances that the Premier referred to in his remarks with respect to SARS, the blackout, West Nile and mad cow: These things seem to follow me around wherever I go.

Even my first election, as Norm has pointed out and as the Premier and Howard have pointed out, wasn't exactly easy either. Everybody always thought that you could run a dog in the riding of Parry Sound under a Conservative banner and get elected. The answer was yes, but just

barely, on March 19, 1981. I did manage to improve upon that, though, as has been pointed out, in several subsequent elections. I wasn't able to take my seat in the House right away; in fact, I can remember arriving at Queen's Park after the recount confirmed a six-vote plurality, having lost 40% of my majority in the judicial recount. I was given an office in room 416, half of which was a vault; perhaps that was a prelude of things to come in the future. Of course, even my leaving this place, according to some pundits, has not been the easiest thing to do—no names mentioned, of course.

One never knows where one's life journey will lead them as they go through life, and perhaps that's just as well in many cases.

I have a great deal of thanks to give to my mother, who is watching on television today. She never misses question period, by the way, whether I'm here or not. She reminded me not to be late. Mothers certainly seem to know their offspring quite well. My advice from Isabel today was, "No pointy-headed comments, please," so I'll try to refrain from those as well.

1420

I've learned through my many years of public service that one should never take oneself too seriously. You should indeed take the office seriously and the system seriously and the institutions of our democratic society seriously, but one should never take oneself too seriously.

Public service, I would say to the young people out there, is a very fascinating, rewarding, interesting, worthwhile endeavour. I've been fortunate in life. I had parents who instilled in me—my mother, especially—the value of a good education. I was the first person in my family on either side to receive a post-secondary education. I learned from my father, who was a labourer in Windsor, Ontario, a strong work ethic and principles. I am proud to carry those roots with me to this day.

I say to my former wife, Vicki—she was very, very supportive in many, many years of public service, as indeed were my children, Justin and Natalie. Natalie, in her own right, is quite a little politician. She was five years old when I was first elected. She decided, along with her friend, that they would conduct an election in their kindergarten class. I won that election by more than six votes, I might add. Her friend happened to be the daughter of the returning officer in Parry Sound riding, who then proceeded during the course of the election campaign to put my sign up in her bedroom window, which of course was a no-no, and led to some discipline on behalf of her father, I believe.

I say to Isabel, who certainly has been in public life and understands what this is all about: Nobody could have been more supportive of me than you were during some very difficult times. Certainly, to be the spouse of an elected member is difficult enough. To be the spouse of the leader of a party is difficult enough. But to be the spouse of a Premier and travel on a bus across the province is something that you have to experience to understand, and I see the Premier shaking and nodding his head, as indeed Mr. Hampton is as well. It's certainly an

interesting and fascinating experience, but one requires tremendous support. So thank you, dear, for all that support.

I've been very fortunate in my 20-some years of public service. I've always had great staff, some of whom are in the members' gallery here this afternoon. You're quite correct; I have had the same staff person, or did have—Norm has inherited her now—in my constituency office in Parry Sound, when I was the member for Parry Sound and then Parry Sound-Muskoka. I've always tried to treat my staff as I'd like to be treated myself, and I've always tried to treat them as part of my family. Indeed, they are very important people in the life of any member of the Legislative Assembly.

I've also been fortunate in having had many decent mentors throughout my lifetime. One that first comes to mind is my former law partner Bill Green. For those of you on the government side of the House, you'll be happy to know that Bill Green was the president of the local Liberal Association for some 25 years. He was also the chairman of the West Parry Sound Board of Education for some 25 years. His wife, Beth, who may indeed be watching today and is still with us, was heading up the social family services in Parry Sound at that time. They instilled in me a lot of social conscience, especially with respect to the native community in the province of Ontario. It's something that has never left me and will always be with me, and it's something that I've appreciated every single day that I've been allowed to serve in public service.

I also had some very good teachers in the personas of Lorne Maeck, Gordon Aiken, Allister Johnston and the late Stan Darling, all of whom gave me different aspects of what it takes to be a good representative.

It's kind of fitting that when I was first elected, the first event I went to was held in a local agricultural society hall. It was the delivery of a fire truck in northern Ontario, I say to the Minister of Northern Affairs. The last event I attended as a local MPP was also to a local agricultural society, this time to an annual general meeting. That brings back to me the fact that all politics are local, as someone once said, and that this province is really, truly great. We have literally hundreds of great communities. There are great people throughout this terrific province of Ontario, and they are who we are as Ontarians and who we are as Canadians.

I've had the experience of bumping into and working with a lot of decent people over the years. Some have been mentioned here earlier today. Norm mentioned the Honourable Bette Stephenson. Bette was the Minister of Education and Minister of Colleges and Universities when I was first elected. The Premier of the day, Bill Davis, approached her and asked her who she would like to serve as her parliamentary assistant. She said, "Either one of the Bobbsey Twins would be fine." Bill Davis asked, "Who the hell are the Bobbsey Twins?" The Bobbsey Twins, according to Bette, were Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. They both came from the same part of the province. She couldn't tell us apart, so she'd take

either one of the Bobbsey Twins as her parliamentary assistant. I lucked out and became Bette's parliamentary assistant. Bette certainly spoke her mind and continues to speak her mind to this day, but was a tremendous asset and mentor to me throughout my political life.

Larry Grossman: Talking about principles and dedication and having your heart in the right place and following it, I can't think of many better people in this Legislature than Larry Grossman.

Bob Nixon: Bob Nixon was the individual who phoned me and wrote me a very nice letter when I was first appointed Minister of Finance, informing me that he and his wife were now on their third cup of coffee that morning. He was having a chance to completely read the *Globe and Mail* and knew I would be up to my behind in alligators going through numerous briefings as finance minister. He certainly was quite helpful to me, as indeed the Honourable Darcy McKeough was as well.

Politics has a strange way of "what goes around comes around," and sometimes you get back what you give. I can remember as Bette's parliamentary assistant—she was much more large-P political than I was—going to an event in Quinte riding when we were opening a new community college there. I was surprised to learn that I was speaking but the local member was not, so I insisted that the entire proceedings be stopped until one Mr. Hugh O'Neil was given his rightful place on the podium and asked to speak. I didn't do that for any political gain; I did it because it was the right thing to do. Little did I know that many years later, when I was in opposition and Mr. O'Neil was in cabinet, that would pay great dividends for me. I don't think there was a small community—I had 48 organized communities in my old riding of Parry Sound and then Parry Sound-Muskoka—that didn't receive some benevolence from Mr. O'Neil in the form of a skating rink, a baseball diamond, an arena or things of that nature. So I say to members of cabinet, you should remember that as you go forth on your many deliberations.

Elie Martel of course was a great character. I will never forget going to House leaders' meetings with Bob Nixon, Elie Martel and Mike Harris. This would usually be around Christmastime when tempers were getting thin in the Legislature. It would be a very late dinner. On a couple of occasions when Elie and Mike almost came to blows, Bob and I didn't know whether to help them or continue on laughing, but they always seemed to sort themselves out at the end of the day.

My very first recollection of doing anything outside of this place as an elected member with Norm wouldn't surprise you: It was a trip. I believe Norm was Mr. McMurtry's parliamentary assistant at the time. Jim Breithaupt, Jim Renwick and Norm were off to some meeting that attorneys general were supposed to be attending in Vancouver, and I was asked by Norm if I would like to accompany them. I see you're still here, Norm, so that must have gone relatively well.

1430

I learned a lot about camaraderie among different political parties in that simple two- or three-day adven-

ture. It's a side of our life, I think, that the public doesn't very often get to see. They assume that what they see on the screen in question period is what really goes on all day, every day, 24 hours a day. I'm here to disappoint you and tell you that nothing could be further from the truth. There indeed is a lot of respect in this House among members on different sides. We may have different ways of achieving goals, but I believe that we all have the same goals in mind at the end of the day, and that is to try to make our little part of the province of Ontario—or, if you are fortunate enough to serve in cabinet or as Premier, the entire province of Ontario—a little bit better place in which to live.

When people talk about important things that you've done in your political life, I still think back to one of the very first things that I fought hard for, and that was a young boy by the name of Peter Mang, who had received a serious head injury, having been hit by a pickup truck when his toboggan crossed the road around Christmas-time. The only treatment for young Mr. Mang was, it seemed, in Philadelphia, and the Ministry of Health refused to pay his way there. I can tell you, speaking of pit bulls, Mr. Attorney General—I understand this is a very significant day in the Legislature—I was like a pit bull with that particular issue. I would not let go of it until young Mr. Mang received the treatment that he deserved. Those are the things that I think of when I think about, "What have you accomplished in your 20-some years of public service?"

I can remember going to my first interprovincial ministers' meeting. I was Minister of Resources Development, and I was going there as the Minister of Native Affairs for the province of Ontario. I guess the Premier, Bill Davis, thought I needed some guidance, because he sent Bob Welch, the then Deputy Premier, along to watch the proceedings. Much to Mr. Welch's surprise and everybody else's, I pronounced that the province of Ontario was in favour of native self-government.

These are some stories that don't usually hit the media. Needless to say, I received a very startled phone call from the then Premier, Frank Miller, asking me what the hell I was doing. I said, "Well, Frank, I listened to all the arguments on all the various sides and I thought it was the right thing to do. So as I see it, Mr. Premier, you have two choices: You can fire me, or you can work with me to try to make this happen."

To Mr. Miller's benefit, he became a strong, strong advocate for native affairs. I can remember going to a first ministers' meeting on this issue, accompanying him to Ottawa. I can tell you, there has never been a stronger advocate for native people. It's a side of Frank Miller that I don't think many people ever got to see.

There are a lot of highs and a lot of lows in political life, and they have been alluded to. I can think back to the day when, not only my first election and in the recount, but getting to meet the Pope, of course, and fishing with Cardinal Carter. These were quite lofty things for an altar boy from the Anglican Church. They certainly impressed my mother to no end; there's no

doubt about that. Speaking of my mother, I had the good fortune to be able to introduce her to the Queen. That was certainly a very significant moment in her life.

The election of 1995, of course, was a tremendous high for us, and for me personally. There was a lot of hard work that followed that, and Mike Harris asking me to serve not only as finance minister but as Deputy Premier and as House leader, which of course brought the typical response from my mother: "Are you sure you can do all those jobs?" I guess the answer was, "Some of them better than others, at the end of the day." But I always loved the challenge and was happy to embrace it.

One of the lows in 1995 was as the House leader. When it was time to read the throne speech that I was to give to the Premier, it was not on my desk. And there was, it seemed like, an eternity of silence in this place until my staff member realized that she had left the original throne speech in the Speaker's office—not you, Mr. Speaker; a former Speaker. There was a lot of hastening down the hallway to get the throne speech and deliver it so it could actually be read.

Obviously the low in my life as an elected member would be, first, the death of my dad in November 1994 and then the death of my son, Justin, in October 1995. Losing one's parent is something that I guess is in the natural order of things, and you can accept it one way or another. Losing your child is something you would never wish on anyone, and unless you've experienced it, as I know some members in this House have, you can't begin to appreciate what a difficult time that is.

It may surprise the public to know that Conservatives actually have a social conscience, that the NDP are not all Marxist-Leninists—some even do relatively well on Bay Street, according to Bob Rae—and that Liberals do have some principles and actually stand for some things.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Don't go that far.

Mr. Eves: I had you right up until then—right, Frank?

In all seriousness, as I said a few moments ago, I believe that all 103 members are here for the same reason, and that is to try to improve the lot of others in the province of Ontario. We just have different ways of going about trying to achieve that.

I would like to leave you with a few thoughts.

You are indeed a very privileged group. There are not many people who are fortunate enough to ever become elected as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Out of a population of millions, you are a very fortunate group indeed. It is a family, whether you like it or not, of all three political parties, and we are all here and serving for the same reasons. I would ask you to think about that in some of your debates—not that I ever entered into any difficult debates in my lifetime or disagreed with others. But we are a privileged group, and I would ask you to remember that you're fortunate indeed.

I say to the government members that not everything previous administrations did was wrong. They actually did some good things, and perhaps you should maybe acknowledge that from time to time. I say to the members on the opposition side of the House that not everything

they do is wrong, and you might actually care to acknowledge that from time to time. I don't believe you can improve yourself or improve the lot of others by lowering or destroying others. I've never had that philosophy.

All politics are local. We all have our roots in the community. Mine happen to be in the Big Brothers organization, the Kinsmen Club and helping children with cystic fibrosis, in making a difference and improving the lives of others. I know that you all come to this place with similar stories. I have always believed in fiscal responsibility with a large social conscience; in balancing the books but taking care of those people in our society who, through no fault of their own, are unable to take care of themselves.

My son, Justin, taught me an awful lot about that. When Justin was first going to Curry College in Boston, he was asked as a psychology and sociology project to take under his wing a young, disadvantaged youth. Justin being Justin and being somewhat stubborn, not unlike his dad, decided to take two disadvantaged youths under his wing. They were two black, inner-city youths named Malcolm and Jamal. They didn't have a father or a mother. Their father had long since left, and their mother was in jail for murder. After their mother was sent to jail, they lived on their own in a tenement without anybody realizing they didn't have any parents at home. This carried on for several weeks until one of their teachers finally twigged that something was amiss.

Justin made a huge difference in the lives of those two young people, and that is really, to me, what life is all about. That is what the driving influence behind the Justin Eves Foundation is all about.

There is a saying on Justin's tombstone that reads like this: "He looked for the best in others and he gave the best of himself." I hope the same can be said of me, having served in this place for some 24 years. Thank you very much.

Applause.

Mr. Eves was accompanied from the chamber.

The Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

1440

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY AMENDMENT ACT (SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY), 2005 LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ACCÈS À L'INFORMATION ET LA PROTECTION DE LA VIE PRIVÉE (PRÉSIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLÉE)

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 173, An Act to amend the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act respecting the Speaker of

the Assembly / *Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'accès à l'information et la protection de la vie privée en ce qui a trait au président de l'Assemblée.*

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Kormos?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The bill amends the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to provide that the act applies with respect to records in the custody of the Speaker, with the exception of records that pertain to his or her role as a member of the assembly.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HOURS OF WORK HEURES DE TRAVAIL

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I rise to mark the fact that this government has put an end to the 60-hour workweek as of today.

Je suis fier du fait que nous protégeons les travailleurs et les travailleurs vulnérables en renforçant leur droit de décider s'ils veulent ou non travailler des heures excédentaires. En même temps, nous veillons à ce que les entreprises de l'Ontario soient en mesure de s'adapter rapidement afin de soutenir la concurrence au sein de l'économie d'aujourd'hui.

This is part of a four-point plan to protect workers, while securing the productivity of business. The four points are to (1) eliminate the forced 60-hour workweek; (2) increase the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of employers; (3) increase the awareness of the rights and responsibilities of workers; and (4) enhance enforcement to target employers who choose not to comply with the law.

In January a year ago, I announced that we would undertake to end the 60-hour workweek. We then embarked on a period of consultation. During these consultations, Ministry of Labour officials met with 31 key labour, employer and community stakeholders. We received over 30 submissions from other stakeholders and almost 80 letters from members of the general public.

Last April, I had the privilege of introducing the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Hours of Work and Other Matters), 2004. On December 9, 2004, this legislation was passed by the Ontario Legislature.

Today that law comes into force. Today, workers in Ontario have a genuine choice as to whether they will choose to work extra hours or not. They will be protected from the type of pressure they could have been subject to under the previous legislation, which did not require government approval for hours above 48, up to 60.

La loi qui entre en vigueur aujourd'hui protégera le droit des employés de décider, librement et en connaissance de cause, s'ils vont travailler davantage d'heures ou utiliser ces heures pour trouver un équilibre entre leur vie professionnelle et leur vie personnelle.

Employers who want employees to work more than 48 hours in a workweek must meet the requirements of the Employment Standards Amendment Act, including giving non-unionized employees an information sheet, published by the Ministry of Labour, on rights and responsibilities regarding hours of work and overtime pay; obtaining written agreement from the employee, or from the union if the workplace is unionized; and receiving approval from the Ministry of Labour.

What about overtime averaging? Overtime averaging has been around since 1968. From that time, approval by the ministry was required for overtime averaging of two or more weeks. With the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the requirement for ministry approval was eliminated except for periods over four weeks. We have restored the requirement for approval of averaging of two or more weeks.

This government believes that we must build a strong and prosperous economy, one that makes Ontario the place to be for years to come. That is why, when we proposed these changes, we took a fair and balanced approach. We are determined to protect the vulnerable, but we are also determined to do so in a way that will ensure that the businesses of Ontario have the necessary flexibility to compete nationally and internationally. We have done that. The legislation coming into force today achieves the balance we were seeking.

Today, employees have greater choice in balancing their work life and their home life.

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We listened to business and came up with a system where businesses will be encouraged to apply on-line. It is user-friendly, speedy and efficient.

We have also expanded our awareness initiatives to make employers aware of their employment standards rights and responsibilities. The Ministry of Labour Web site readily directs employers to the information they need.

We have also created an Internet portal, the workplace gateway. This is accessible through the ministry's Web site and also through the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services' Service Ontario initiative. Congratulations to my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Businesses are now able to easily find out their rights and responsibilities. When businesses know their rights and responsibilities, they are much more likely to comply.

We have also gone to work creating greater awareness of the law for workers. We have made presentations and provided literature to more than 100 community centres. As well, since many of the most vulnerable in our society do not speak English or French as a first language, we have created brochures in languages these workers more easily understand. They are available in Arabic, Bengali,

Chinese, Dari, Farsi, Filipino, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tamil, Urdu and Vietnamese, in addition to English and French. If you are going to fully protect people, the place to start is making them aware of their rights. We have done that.

I want to emphasize that the vast majority of businesses are either doing the right thing or trying to do the right thing. For businesses choosing not to follow the law, we have stepped up enforcement, targeting those employers with poor employment standards records. We have also set a target of 2,000 proactive inspections this year.

We have kept our promise to the people of Ontario. We said we would end the 60-hour workweek; we have. By giving employees a greater choice, we're improving their quality of life. This is part of our plan to strengthen our greatest competitive advantage: the people of Ontario.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am delighted to rise in the House today to inform the members of the House about the tremendous strides this government has made to address the community and economic development needs of northerners.

In December, I joined Premier Dalton McGuinty in Sudbury and Thunder Bay to unveil details of the northern prosperity plan, a plan that will strengthen communities, foster job creation and generate prosperity opportunities for all northerners. Part of that plan is a refocused northern Ontario heritage fund. As chair of the fund, I was delighted to announce last month in Sault Ste. Marie that our government has delivered on its commitment to refocus the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. so that it responds more effectively to urgent northern priorities.

Through six new programs, the NOHFC will help private sector enterprises committed to creating jobs in the north, while continuing to support vital infrastructure and community development projects. They will address such pressing needs as economic diversification and opportunities for youth to remain in, or to return to, the north. During a recent tour of northwestern Ontario to acquaint representatives of community groups with the new NOHFC programs, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Bill Mauro, was gratified by the high level of interest in the new programs. A refocused northern Ontario heritage fund points northerners on to the path to prosperity.

In recent weeks, our government has announced other key initiatives that stand as milestones on that path. Just over one week ago, I had the honour of unveiling three of our four new northern development councils and introducing the distinguished northerners who have stepped forward to serve on them. Through the northern development councils, this government is fulfilling its commit-

ment to engage northerners in the decisions that will affect them. With the establishment of these councils, our government is enabling a stronger northern perspective to be brought to provincial policy and program development.

Another important initiative is the northern Ontario grow bonds business loan program. Last Friday, I launched this program in Thunder Bay, a program that will provide new and expanding small and medium-sized businesses across the north with access to business loans. My ministry will continue to spread the word about both the business loans program and the sale of northern Ontario grow bonds. The sale of these bonds will run from March 21 until April 11 and will be coordinated by the Ministry of Finance. We have set a northern Ontario grow bonds sales target of \$20 million. As a passionate northerner, I anticipate that northerners from across the region will show their pride in and commitment to the north by buying bonds and investing in our communities.

The future prosperity of northern Ontario hinges on having communities that are well positioned to attract new investment and growth. The future prosperity of northern Ontario hinges on the ability of our private sector partners to generate the investments necessary to create jobs, to grow, to expand and to thrive. The future prosperity of northern Ontario hinges on the region's capacity to retain and attract tomorrow's workforce, tomorrow's families and tomorrow's community-builders. Our government is working shoulder to shoulder alongside our northern stakeholders, including our First Nations partners, to ensure that northern Ontario is on that path.

Without question, we are doing what the previous government failed to do: We are ensuring that the interests of northern Ontario are front and centre on our agenda for positive change. Our tireless efforts and our many initiatives are specifically targeted to make certain that the northern prosperity plan supports this. And we will continue to work diligently for the good of the north, because ensuring the best interests of the north translates into a better and stronger Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the statement by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines today.

In the spirit of Mr. Eves's comments today, I'd like to start out by saying I'm pleased to see the government is implementing the northern Ontario grow bonds initiative. I know the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce had been pushing for that initiative. I do believe it's important to create opportunities for business to gain access to capital. I am, however, concerned that the government is going to botch the implementation of this program. For example, I hope you don't burden the whole program with too much expensive administration. I'd like to ask why you didn't partner with the federal government and use their already existing offices, the Community Futures offices that are operating very much in the banking services now, and save on the administration costs.

I would also like to question why you seem to be excluding the hospitality industry, the hospitality business. It says on your form, "Please note, funding cannot be used to set up or expand a retail, construction or hospitality business." I assume that includes the tourism business, and you can correct me if I'm wrong. I hope I'm wrong on that, because certainly the tourism industry in northern Ontario has great potential and also has great needs for access to capital. So I would hope I am wrong on that.

The timelines also seem very restrictive. The application time is February 25 to April 15. It's a very restrictive amount of time to be able to get a business plan together and make application to make use of the funds. I would like to see that extended or there to be no deadline whatsoever.

Unfortunately, you're also doing a lot to hurt business with many of your government's actions. Recently, of course, you announced a 12% increase in electricity prices for large users. I have to ask you, what do you think that is going to do for the mills and mines of northwestern Ontario? I have countless news clippings to show that the mills and mines are very concerned about that, but in two and a half minutes I don't have time to read them all to you. There is your 27% increase in corporate taxes that you have already brought into effect, as well as your new health tax. Your 60-hour workweek is a major concern, and I know the critic for labour will speak to that.

I don't have time to go over the list of things you aren't doing, but thank you for your statement today.

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HOURS OF WORK

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I want to begin by clarifying that this bill today to end the 60-hour workweek does not do so. This bill does not purport to do what the minister claims it does. What it actually does is create a huge paper burden for employees and employers once an agreement is reached to work beyond 48 hours.

This bill, regrettably, will not help employees in this province find new jobs. In fact, we've already heard from small business that this is going to reduce their flexibility. We've heard from the logging industry that this does not recognize the short window they have to get their product to market. So if this bill does anything at all, it provides a disincentive for job creation and for business to stay in the province of Ontario. In today's globalized economy, the reality is that businesses are able to relocate very easily.

I would also say, it's very interesting that the minister states in his release, "Some employees reported feeling pressured into agreeing to an employer's request to work more than 48 hours a week," and yet on the other hand he introduces Bill 144, which takes away the democratic right of a secret ballot vote in the construction sector. Do you not think employees in the construction sector felt

and feel pressure to join a union? Why would you take away their basic democratic right to a secret ballot vote? They are pressured. If you think employees are pressured in the workplace to work 60 hours, I can tell you that employees in the construction industry feel very pressured to join a union as well. So you had better take a look at what you're doing when you are introducing new legislation, because in the case of Bill 144, you are turning back the clock on democratic labour relations by 15 years. In fact, you are doing this at a time when democracies around this world are emerging.

I think all these bills are just an attempt to divert attention from the real crisis that we have in health care: a shortage of doctors, no funding for hospitals, a huge health tax, and many broken promises.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I say to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines that this is not a bad thing in itself. The only thing I would say is this: This is certainly not the model that people had asked for, in the final show when we see the details of this thing. But in the end we'll take a look.

There's nothing new, because this type of stuff has been done before. This is not the first government to put in place investment vehicles to allow people in northern Ontario to invest in themselves. For example, our government put in place labour-sponsored venture capital funds that were used to great success in many projects in northern Ontario.

If you really want to help northern development, Minister, talk to your Minister of Natural Resources; talk to your Minister of Energy. Those are the ones who are running around gunshot when it comes to prosperity and jobs in northern Ontario. On your watch, since Premier Dalton McGuinty took over the reins of power in Ontario, we have lost 6,000 jobs in northern Ontario. Why? One reason has to do with what you are doing in regard to forestry. You know what is happening in northern Ontario. We've got companies like Domtar, Tembec and others that are saying, "Listen, the wood is ours. We can do what we want with it." It doesn't belong to the crown, in their view. "We'll take the wood and we'll ship it from smaller communities and put it into supermills." Bravo for the supermills; boo for the small communities that are going to lose their only employer, communities like Kirkland Lake and Opasatika and others. So I say, get hold of your Minister of Natural Resources and get him to do his job, which is to say that the forest belongs to the community and doesn't belong to corporate entities. The quicker we get that into his head, the better off we are going to be in northern Ontario.

To your Minister of Energy, I certainly hope I'm not boring you, because the 12% hydro rate increases that were announced in this House last week, I'll tell you, are not being very well received where I come from. The largest hydro user in this province is Kidd Creek Mines in the city of Timmins. They are absolutely petrified

about what this means to them. They're looking at this and saying that for a company that is so energy dependent, as they are, a 12% increase is really a big blow to deal with, not to speak about what it means to the paper industry. If you are running Tembec's plant in Kapuskasing, which runs a TMP process, if you are the mill in Kenora, if you are the mill in Thunder Bay—Inco as well—you're looking at these hydro rate increases and saying, "How am I going to be able to survive over the upcoming time?"

So I say to you, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, get your Minister of Energy and your Minister of Natural Resources and take them behind the woodshed, beat them up and get them back in here doing what they should be doing for northerners, and that is helping us develop strategies that really put northern Ontario first.

HOURS OF WORK

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me say on behalf of New Democrats to the Minister of Labour, who has been, oh, so self-congratulatory about his Bill 63—the Minister of Labour says he has rolled back the 60-hour workweek. Horse feathers. The Minister of Labour supersized the 60-hour workweek. The Minister of Labour has created legislation and standards in this province that will allow permits to be presumed to have been provided upon the mere application by employers for thousands upon thousands of workers to work in excess of 60 hours.

This Minister of Labour and this Dalton McGuinty government have left workers still but dreaming about the prospect of overtime after 40 hours a week. The 40-hour week is the furthest thing in the world from reality for the Liberals in the province of Ontario.

Let me tell you that for women like the women in Niagara, who work two jobs because this government has denied them adequate increases in minimum wage—they work in the hospitality industry, breaking their backs cleaning hotel rooms in the early morning, and then go to the 7-Eleven or the Avondale to work the balance of the day, till 10 or 11 at night, because this government has denied them real and meaningful increases in minimum wage. There's no such thing as a 60-, 50- or 40-hour workweek for workers whose incomes are inadequate to allow them to support themselves unless they're working at two and three jobs.

The Dalton McGuinty Liberal government has demonstrated itself to be the good buddy and friend of big business—whether it's the banking industry with their tax reductions or the auto insurance industry with unheard-of new profits of \$4.2 billion a year—and they leave working women and men in their wake.

This Liberal government at Queen's Park has continued a concentrated attack on working women and men and their trade unions. I say to you, this government has nothing to brag about when it comes to their ongoing attack on working people in this province, especially the

most vulnerable, the lowest paid, those workers who are inevitably women working in those low-wage job ghettos. This government should be ashamed. This minister should acknowledge his absolute failure as a Minister of Labour.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): On a point of order, the member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My point of order is pursuant to standing order 97(d). On October 28, 2004, I filed seven questions with the Minister of Education. As you well know, the standing orders require that the minister "shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." I want to point out that the 24 sitting days in which responses should have been made expired on December 16, 2004. Further, the minister has had the entire intersession to deal with those questions. We're now in the ninth sitting day of this session, and I still have no word from the minister on these questions.

I would ask that you, as Speaker, use your authority to call on the minister to comply with the standing orders.

The Speaker: I'd just like to remind the government House leader that you are required, under standing order 97(d), to provide answers to written questions within 24 sitting days. Your responses are overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the answers will be forthcoming.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): It's not a point of order, Mr. Speaker, but my understanding is that those questions will be tabled today.

The Speaker: I hope that will satisfy the member.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I just want to bring to the attention of the House that in the east lobby is Mr. Mohammed Benattia, a member of the federal Parliament and National Democratic Liberal Party of Morocco. I just want to welcome him.

DEFERRED VOTES

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour

accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1511 to 1516.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sterling, Norman W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I was voting against the bill.

The Speaker: You cannot have a point of order. We are just having a count of the votes.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like to hear the point of order from the member from Nepean-Carleton.

Mr. Baird: You will know, as an experienced parliamentarian, that sometimes for the best of us there is a bit of confusion. I would ask for unanimous consent that the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford's vote reflect his opposition to the bill and be put in as a "nay."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Do we have unanimous consent? I'm hearing a no on this.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Premier, according to a TVO story by Susanna Kelley that aired last Friday, you and your wife were hosted at the Sorbara family household for a \$10,000-per-person fundraiser. The invited guests to this exclusive, swanky soiree included a dozen developers, most of them with interests in the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt.

A year and a half ago, you promised to—and I'm quoting—"fully disclose political donations in real time." This fundraiser took place last May. Almost a year has passed since then. That's a year in real time. When will you keep your promise and disclose the names of these \$10,000 donors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I've made the offer at least twice in this Legislature, and I'll make it again. If Mr. Tory is prepared to submit to this, if Mr. Hampton on behalf of his party is prepared to submit to this, then we can move very quickly to ensure that we have real-time reporting with respect to all of our political receipts.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Tory is prepared. I remind the Premier that promise 166 of your Liberal Party election platform states, "We will fully disclose donations in real time." Premier, this is about your showing leadership and actually keeping a promise.

A dozen developers were invited by the Liberal Party to the finance minister's home for an exclusive meeting with the two most powerful politicians in Ontario, and it cost them \$10,000 each for that privilege. TVO obtained a letter addressed to you from one of the developers. The letter states that you were making promises to developers at the fundraiser regarding what lands would and would not be included in your greenbelt scheme. You seem incapable of keeping your promises to the public but quite happy to make them and keep them to those who can afford to pay.

How can anybody have confidence in your greenbelt map, given the revelation that you personally made promises in exchange for \$10,000 donations to the Ontario Liberal Party?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Hang on a second. Let's understand what we're talking about. We made a commitment in our platform to create 600,000 more acres of protected space. We've gone beyond that and protected one million more acres of protected space. How does that somehow connect with breaking a promise? That's what I call fulfilling a promise and much more.

Mr. Runciman: The Premier is perfecting the art of obfuscation. He's not answering my question here, and

we now see the Premier again trying to defend the indefensible.

What you said—and I'm quoting you again—in 2001, Premier McGuinty, then the Leader of the Opposition: "We don't believe that we are accountable to the well-connected or the wealthy few or to the government's special interests, such as their developer friends."

Premier, you have failed to release any scientific basis for the boundaries of your greenbelt and you were caught making promises to developers in return for a \$10,000 cheque payable to the Ontario Liberal Party. This is what it looks like: It appears that the going rate is \$10,000 a promise and that paying more taxes doesn't guarantee someone that your promises will be kept. It has to be a direct donation to your party.

Premier, you can very quickly clear up this mess. Keep your promise and immediately disclose the donations and attendance at the Sorbara fundraiser.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The source of the complaint here comes from someone who is complaining that his land has been included in the greenbelt. How is that buying influence? I ask you, how is that buying influence? We have said that when it comes to the greenbelt, we will act in the greater public interest. We are proud of what we've done and proud that we've protected a further one million acres of green space, for a total of 1.8 million acres, a land mass larger than Prince Edward Island itself. We have done that, we have protected that in perpetuity and, let me tell you, it has nothing to do with what anybody might have said. What we have done here is acted in the greater public interest.

Mr. Runciman: If it's in the greater public interest, let's see the names; let's see the donations; let's see the real impact here. You made the promise to disclose donations in real time. As I said, that's number 166 on your list of over 230. Promise 171 from your platform stated, and I'm quoting again, "We will make the government's business your business."

Premier, \$10,000 swanky soirees hosted by your finance minister's family, where you've been caught making promises to developers, isn't the people's business. We now have a greenbelt with arbitrary boundaries that have not been backed up by any scientific reason, and I guess we know why.

Premier, what promises did you make on the night of May 14, 2004, at Mr. Sorbara's home?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not sure my friend wants to go down this path. We're having a dispute with developers because we stood up for the greenbelt. We refused to allow ourselves to be influenced by any financial contributions, and we're proud and open and transparent in that. We're having a dispute with developers because we went ahead with the greenbelt.

When the shoe was on the other foot, when those people sat on this side of the House, we know where they stood when it came to their unholy alliance with developers in Ontario. Again, I'm proud to say that we stood up for the greater public interest, and the result is to have a brand new 1.8-million-acre greenbelt in Ontario.

Mr. Runciman: The Ontario Liberal Party doesn't exactly have a long tradition of above-board relationships with developers. This is your chance to right a perceived wrong. You made promises to developers at an exclusive Liberal fundraiser in exchange for a \$10,000 donation per person to the Ontario Liberal Party. Will you finally do what's right and disclose all details and records from that fundraiser to prove—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I remember, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'll remember if you will keep quiet. In the meantime, allow the leader of the official opposition to ask his question so that I am able to hear it. The leader of the official opposition, your supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: I will repeat it just to get it on the record: Premier, will you finally do what's right and disclose all details and records from that fundraiser to prove that everything is above-board?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I appreciate the member's belated interest in disclosing this kind of information, but I'm proud to say that we ran on full disclosure as part of our platform. I know that the Attorney General will in due course be introducing legislation, and we look forward to delivering on that commitment, along with the others.

Mr. Runciman: In due course? The government has been in office for about a year and a half now, so we're not sure what "due course" means.

You have not released any scientific data supporting the drawing of your greenbelt boundaries. The only evidence we now have as to how these boundaries were drawn is a letter from a developer saying that you made promises to them in an exclusive Liberal fundraiser at the finance minister's household. For this privilege, developers were told to write a cheque to the Ontario Liberal Party for \$10,000.

Premier, this smells, and you have done nothing to put anybody's mind at ease. Release the records from this fundraiser, as you promised you would do.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: What we have done here, and I think the record is very clear: We ran on a commitment to create 600,000 more acres of protected green space in Ontario in the greater Golden Horseshoe. After taking a close look at that, after we assumed responsibility as a government, we decided that we could and should proceed to exceed our commitment and protect an additional one million acres.

If people want to know where we stand on this issue, the record speaks very much for itself. We stood up for 1.8 million acres of protected greenbelt, and we are proud to do so.

1530

SALE OF LANDS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you

defended York University's \$15.8-million shady land deal with developer Tribute Communities. This multi-million-dollar land deal was untendered. The land was sold for less than half of its commercial value. Joseph Sorbara, who brokered this land deal for the university, happens to be a close business associate of the developer-purchaser. You said that it's OK for the same people, the York University board of governors, who rubber-stamped this shady deal in the first place, to now decide if the deal is proper and acceptable.

This is about the public trust. This is about protecting the public purse. How can the same people who created this shady land deal in the first place be relied upon to do your job and protect the public purse?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I reject the characterization of my response yesterday offered by the leader of the NDP. What I said is that we should allow the process to unfold. I said that the board of governors had taken upon themselves to deliberate on the matter.

They've now specifically said, and I quote from a release put out yesterday, "Because of publicly expressed concerns, it has been agreed that we will forthwith ask an independent person to review all aspects of the transaction. The board and the university will co-operate fully with this independent person, whose report to the board will be made public."

I'm not sure what more my friend might be looking for in this regard. I believe that is a responsible, appropriate response made by the board of governors for York University.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, your process involves the same board that was responsible for this shady deal now going out and appointing someone to confirm their shady deal. I don't think that it's ever acceptable in our society to have someone pass judgment on their own conduct, but that's what you seem to be arguing for.

I can tell you, the students and the faculty at York University see it for what it is. They see it as a cover-up, and they've said it publicly. It was untendered, they did not receive fair market value, there was a conflict of interest on the face of the deal, and yet you seem to say that is perfectly acceptable. I said that the Provincial Auditor should look at this; someone independent, not connected with the deal in the first place, should look at it. Why are you opposed to having someone independent, like the Provincial Auditor, look at this shady deal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think it's very much apparent that the leader of the NDP has no confidence whatsoever in those who sit on the board of governors for York University. One of those individuals—I know the leader of the NDP will know him—is Mr. Justice Patrick LeSage. I could provide him with other names, but these are people of integrity and commitment, who understand the seriousness of this issue. I think that they've acted responsibly in the circumstances. The leader of the NDP refuses to understand that they've asked for an independent person to come in and take a look at what has happened, to prepare a written report and to make that

report public. Again, I think that is the appropriate response.

Mr. Hampton: It is a fundamental principle of our system of law that those people who were involved in a transaction should not then be involved in any way in deciding whether that transaction was appropriate or not. That's exactly what you've offered up. You are now saying that the very people who oversaw this shady deal from the beginning can now decide who will judge the deal. I think that that's wrong.

This is what you used to say: "We will give the auditor the power to scrutinize hospitals, universities, school boards and other major organizations funded by the people of Ontario so that you know whether your dollars are being well spent." To put it this way, Premier, there was no caveat in your statement saying, "unless you're the finance minister's brother."

So I'm asking you again. This is about the public trust. This is about protecting the public purse. This is your promise: You said the Provincial Auditor should look at these issues. Will you support the Provincial Auditor doing an independent examination, or is it still your position that—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I just cannot accept the characterization that the member opposite puts on it. He calls this a shady transaction because, I assume, it feeds the story. He does not allow a process of any kind to unfold. He makes a completely unfair connection between this Minister of Finance and one of his siblings. I have nine brothers and sisters; I cannot account for what they do, and it would be unfair to connect them to my actions. I think the leader of the NDP understands that. I think he should know better than that.

I think what we have in place now is a responsible, appropriate response being offered by the board of governors for York University. I think it's in everybody's interest here to allow cooler heads to prevail, to allow the process to unfold and to wait for the delivery of that public report.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: This is about an untendered contract, where land was sold at less than half its value by somebody who, on the face of it, was in a conflict of interest. I find it very interesting that the holier-than-thou McGuinty government, when it comes to investigating some of its own, says this is OK.

But I want to ask you about another bad deal: Last week, your energy minister announced a whopping 12% increase in hydro rates for Ontario industry. This increase is threatening many industrial jobs, especially in northern Ontario.

Today, we learn that your government has rubber-stamped a 35% pay hike for Tom Parkinson, the CEO of Hydro One. That's a \$750,000 base salary, a \$600,000

bonus and \$123,000 in other compensation. It also includes—get this—a \$125,000 mortgage subsidy and a \$2-million golden parachute, all to be paid by the hydro ratepayers of Ontario.

Premier, how do you defend a 35% pay hike for Hydro One's executive while you're hiking industrial power rates by 12% and killing jobs across—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This was a decision that was taken by the Hydro One board of directors and not the government. That increase that the member references isn't an increase in base salary; a good portion of it is tied to performance. With respect to performance, under Mr. Parkinson's tenure Hydro One has increased operating efficiency and capital efficiency, and bond ratings have improved and continued the trend upward. The board took this under consideration, reviewed the salary and the bonus package in the context of other public utilities as well as comparable private organizations, and the board of directors undertook this contract with Mr. Parkinson.

Mr. Hampton: What I know is that thousands of industrial jobs are at risk across northern Ontario, and Liberals used to stand up and denounce this kind of thing. Where is Michael Bryant, who said of Eleanor Clitheroe and the former Conservative government, "Either you were asleep at the switch or you were the conductor of" the Clitheroe "gravy train," who also said, "You're the shareholder here. You represent the government. You can't tell me that the single shareholder of a company is uninterested in the compensation package of its CEO"? Where are those spokespersons? Now they're justifying a 35% pay increase, a \$2-million golden handshake severance package, while workers across northern Ontario are at risk of losing their jobs. Can you tell me, Minister: What is your answer to all those workers at risk of losing their jobs? Should they just pay up and forget about it?

1540

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, the characterization of the leader of the third party is wrong. First of all, Mr. Parkinson, as was pointed out in the Toronto Star today, is still making half of what his predecessor was making in 2001. All the measurable performance targets have been met. Let me take you through them: All financial targets were met in 2002, 2003 and 2004; there has been a 70% increase in safety; large-customer satisfaction is actually up 80%; corporate management structures have been streamlined; transmission and distribution reliability is ahead of OEB targets; employee pride and stakeholder confidence have been restored.

The board of directors has taken a look at this contract. They negotiate, as is their obligation. They made this the recommendation. We have concurred. We believe that in the circumstances, in spite of the difficulties the energy sector is experiencing as a result of past government practices, this is justifiable.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I ask the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Trinity-Spadina to stop heckling across so I can hear the response.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Speaker, I'd appreciate it if you could get the Minister of Tourism to lower it, so I can hear myself think.

Minister, you promised to protect hydro ratepayers. You said you were giving an ironclad commitment to eliminate the Eleanor Clitheroe style of pay packages at Hydro One.

Here is what media across the north are saying about your pay hike. This is the Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal: "Province Fails to Generate Power Confidence."

This is the Timmins Daily Press: "Hydro Hikes Threaten Jobs."

"Local jobs could be lost after Ontario Energy Minister Dwight Duncan announced" a 12% hydro price increase.

The Kenora Miner and News: "Electricity Hike Another Jolt for Abitibi."

"Twelve per cent may close the mill."

After obviously failing in your promise not to allow these irrational pay increases, can you tell me what these workers are supposed to think? You've got lots of money for the executives, but for workers who are worried about high hydro rates, you seem to be saying, "We're just going to jack them up some more." What should those workers be thinking about?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: First of all, there was not a 12% increase. The leader simply mischaracterized that. You neglected to mention the support we received for this from Inco and Dofasco. You neglected to mention the fact that prices went up 43% under your watch. You neglected to mention the fact that 14 mills and hundreds of jobs were lost under your government—nowhere near that under this government.

Do you know what else the member opposite forgot to mention? The chair of the compensation committee at Hydro One is Bob Rae, the fellow who negotiated and recommended this contract.

There was never a less competent government than that on the Hydro file. The deals they negotiated failed. We're not buying rain forests; we're protecting jobs in the north and across—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Again, I'd ask members to direct their questions and responses through the Chair.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Premier. Ontario's farmers don't have \$10,000 per person to donate to the Ontario Liberal Party so they can talk to you. Maybe if they did, hundreds wouldn't be planning to protest on the front lawn of Queen's Park tomorrow.

I want to share some sobering facts with you, Premier. According to StatsCan, farmers in Ontario are facing a \$229-million collective loss this year, compared to a \$1-billion net income for farmers in the rest of Canada. That's a loss six times what farmers lost in Ontario last year.

Premier, the numbers don't lie. Let's hear what you have to say. How can you possibly justify turning your back on Ontario's farmers under these conditions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): To the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): There could be nothing further from the reality. We are not turning our backs on the farmers of this province. If anything, we've demonstrated very clearly that we're going to work with the farmers. The Premier demonstrated leadership by hosting the first-ever summit on agriculture and the agri-food industry. The Premier met with the agricultural leaders on February 22 to hear their concerns first-hand. He gave them commitments of where we could go on some short-term, medium-term and long-term commitments.

We very much welcome the opportunity that the farmers of Ontario are coming here to Queen's Park tomorrow, because one of the things they can clearly demonstrate is that we need to get a message out to urban Ontario about the important role farmers play in our lives on a daily basis. It's incumbent on all of us that we do our part to support Ontario farmers. One way consumers can do that is in their buying habits at the grocery store. Make that conscious decision to buy local, buy Canadian, buy Ontario. Go into a restaurant and ask if it's Canadian beef, ask if it's Ontario wine. I'd just ask the former minister to remember some words, and I'll get that in—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): You can get to it in a supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: That would be good, Mr Speaker. I just want to reiterate, Mr. Premier, that the farmers are not coming because they want to talk to the urban people; they want to talk to you because they believe you've turned your back on them. Farmers from Niagara, Simcoe county, Brantford, Lindsay, Rodney, Zurich, Oxford county and Renfrew county, just to name a few, are heading here tomorrow en masse to say that you have turned your back on Ontario farmers.

According to StatsCan, from 1999 to 2003, under the governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, farm incomes in Ontario averaged \$310 million per year. Now, in the second year of the McGuinty Liberal government, farm incomes will turn to a \$229-million loss.

Premier, it's clear your Minister of Agriculture with his answer just doesn't have the pull necessary to defend Ontario's farmers. You have failed the farmers and your minister is failing the farmers. When will you finally put someone senior in the role and make agriculture a priority in your Liberal government, as you promised to do in the election in 2003?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'll ask the former minister to judge his own record, and the revolving door of agriculture ministers.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): What about answering the question? You're the minister now.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Five agriculture ministers in five years. That is no commitment. I ask that honourable—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Baird: I apologize.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Over the past five years of the Harris-Eves government, we lost an average of 1,000 farmers a year in this province. That's a record they should be extremely disappointed with. That's a former minister who closed agricultural offices all across the province, taking away extension services to farmers in this province. That's a government that cut over \$100 million from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food budget. So judge not. I just ask that the member remember words he used when he was in government, in going to Ottawa: that Ontario needs its fair share. We've passed a resolution. We have a \$23-billion shortfall. We need Ottawa to make sure Ontario gets its fair share.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Minister of Health. Pediatricians across Ontario are meeting on Friday to protest what they describe as a growing crisis in children's health care. They say that your government is using financial incentives to attract graduating paediatricians into a hospital practice, that this drive to promote a hospital versus a community practice will mean longer waiting lists for children who need health services, and that there aren't enough paediatricians in the community now to meet the health care needs of Ontario's children, so this agenda will make the situation even worse.

The chief of paediatric medicine at the Ottawa-Carleton hospital, Dr. Stephen Grodinsky, summed it up by saying that the drive to lure new graduates into hospitals and away from the community "is extremely harmful to the health care needs of Ontario's children."

Minister, why are paediatricians saying that you're promoting a crisis in children's health, and where is your plan to respond to their concerns?

1550

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I had the opportunity in the last hour or so to read three pages of information put out with respect to Friday's session. Fifty of the province's 700 paediatricians are attending that session. It has long been in planning and isn't going to have any impact with respect to patient care on Friday.

I'm proud of the efforts that we've made. Dr. Rapin responded in one news story that I saw today, which indicated that there has been a very significant amount of compensation on the table for paediatricians operating in any session in the province. I think that, along with our

contribution to a universal vaccine program which has been well-heralded by paediatricians, and with my colleague minister's investment in children's mental health—the first such investment in quite a long time—really sends a strong message about the degree to which we value these health care professionals. We do see some increase in the number of paediatricians in practice in the province. I think these things, taken together, help to underscore that this important part of medicine is actually in much better shape than the honourable member would report.

Ms. Martel: Let me repeat what the chief of paediatric medicine had to say. Dr. Stephen Grodinsky said that your incentives to try to lure new graduates into hospitals and away from the community are “extremely harmful to the health care needs of Ontario's children.”

Here's the reality: You don't have a deal with Ontario doctors, and they sum up their concerns in a full-page ad in the *Globe and Mail* today; you have the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, who said last week that nurses feel betrayed by your government because of your layoff of nurses; you've got the Ontario Hospital Association going public today with its concerns about your local integrated health networks and calling on you to delay implementation for a couple of years; and now you have Ontario paediatricians reported in the paper as saying they are meeting this Friday to protest your handling of children's health care.

Minister, it seems that some of your major health partners aren't onside. Where is your plan to deal with their health care concerns?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I'm very happy to respond and to tell the honourable member that there's lots of evidence of what our plan is with respect to improvements in pediatric health. I had the opportunity in my earlier answer to speak about new, free child vaccinations.

Let me quote Dr. Diane Sacks, president of the Canadian Paediatric Society: “As a paediatrician, I am relieved to see Ontario moving to make vaccines available to children quickly and free of charge to parents.... Making sure that all children are immunized against serious diseases, regardless of a family's personal financial situation, is a key step in ensuring the health of young Ontarians.”

This is just one example of our plan to improve the quality of care for children. In addition to the investments we've made in children's mental health, this underscores our commitment.

Of course, we're at the table working hard with the Ontario Medical Association on the new arrangement that will put Ontario's doctors in a very, very competitive position across the breadth of our country.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Rural Ontario has a proud tradition of strong agricultural communities. Generation

after generation has worked the land to provide Ontarians with, as Foodland Ontario says, food you know you'll love.

Our farmers are going through a rough patch. They've had to deal with BSE, low prices for their products and new regulations. The farmers need our support now more than ever. They are looking for help. I know that you and Premier McGuinty have met with farm organizations from across the province, and they all have suggestions as to what the government can be doing to help them with the challenges they face. What are we doing to move forward in these hard times?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We started by sitting down and meeting with the leaders of general farm organizations and other commodity groups. We've made the commitment as well to move forward on some short- and long-term initiatives. Part of that is the agricultural policy framework, which will bring \$1.7 billion in assistance into Ontario. We are moving forward on the CAIS program and a review of the CAIS program.

As well, we're looking at the long term. We've invested \$7 million to increase slaughter capacity in this province, to kill 6,500 further animals a week. That's important. That's a long-term investment. We've invested an additional \$4 million in the deadstock industry, because there are many challenges facing rural Ontario and dealing with the issue of deadstock is one of them. We're working with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association for a long-term solution.

We came to the table with \$20 million to support the 1,200 largest agricultural operations in this province. Unlike the Tories, who were great at passing regulations and not bringing any money forward, we came to the table with money to assist our farmers. We fully support our farmers. We're going to continue to support our farmers. We have, and we will continue to do that into the future.

Mr. Crozier: Minister, I understand that over the next two days you will be meeting in Ottawa with your federal and provincial counterparts. What are your plans to ensure that the federal government understands the plight of Ontario farmers and that it does its part to help them?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I have to admit that I was torn as to where to be. Should I be in Ottawa representing Ontario farmers with the provincial ministers and the federal minister, or should I be here with Ontario farmers? I know where I stand, where my loyalty stands, and that's with Ontario farmers. I will be here tomorrow to meet with Ontario's farmers. I look forward to welcoming them here.

But I think, more importantly, it's an opportunity for every one of us to send a very clear message to Ottawa tomorrow. Yes, there are issues that we need to deal with provincially, but there are federal issues. The crisis in grains and oilseeds is a perfect example of where we need national leadership. I hope that I have the farmers of Ontario standing behind me tomorrow as I meet with my other provincial colleagues to send a very clear message

that there are challenges, that there are income crises within agriculture in this province. Ontario is prepared to step up to the plate to do our part. We need the support of the federal government with national policies.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): For the Minister of Agriculture: Last Tuesday, you and Premier McGuinty met with a number of farm organizations, including the tobacco board. It's now March 1, and farmers have to make a decision within the next week or two whether to seed their greenhouses.

The Premier has said that the problems have been turned over to you, and now you're leaving town. We just heard that you're leaving for Ottawa tomorrow. That's incredible.

Laughter.

Mr. Barrett: That's not a laughing matter. Thousands of farmers want you here tomorrow.

Your government jacked up tobacco taxes three times since being elected. When will you open up your purse and share the wealth? Don't skirt this question, Minister. Will you have a funding answer for tobacco farmers before they have to decide to seed their greenhouses and before they leave Queen's Park next week?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'd love to know where the honourable member's loyalties lie, because quite honestly I believe that he is doing an extreme disservice to tobacco farmers in this province. He has been all over the board. He supports the tobacco board, he supports the tobacco farmers in crisis, and he is up advocating for the Lanark Landowners Association.

I know who I deal with. I deal with the duly elected body in this province, the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board. Those are the individuals whom we're going to continue to deal with, unlike this member on the opposite side who tries to divide and conquer. That's not an appropriate way to bring forward a unified voice on agriculture.

We're very committed to moving forward with a transition plan for growers and communities. We have said that, and we're committed to moving forward in that regard. Perhaps if the member could take the nutrients out of his ears and he would listen, he would have understood that I was going to be here in Queen's Park tomorrow to meet the farmers of this province.

The Speaker: It being 4 o'clock, it is required of me by the standing orders to call orders of the day.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent for question period to be completed.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for the completion of question period? Agreed. We will continue question period for the remaining 22 minutes.

Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question today is also for the Minister of Agriculture and Food in respect of the crisis that Ontario's grain and oilseed producers are facing. I would like to remind the minister that corn and soybean prices are at 25-year lows.

Grain and oilseed producers are just one example of a sector that is suffering because of a government that doesn't have a plan. This government has turned its back on rural Ontario.

The Ontario Corn Producers' Association and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture are calling for an immediate cash payment to grain and oilseed farmers of \$300 million to help them survive the 2004 crop disaster prices.

1600

Joe Hickson, a farmer from my riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, is helping to lead the rally tomorrow when it comes to Queen's Park. My concern is that when Ontario farmers come calling at Queen's Park, they won't find any Liberals home. Neither the Minister of Agriculture nor the Premier is going to be here. So for today, would the Minister of Agriculture and Food stand in his place and commit to the \$300 million needed to help those farmers survive the 2004 crop price disaster? Would you tell us that today?

Interjection: Now listen. He'll speak slow.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I will speak slow.

Perhaps with all the heckling, you could not hear. The Minister of Agriculture and Food had a choice to make: to be in Ottawa or be in Toronto. I'm going to be here in Toronto to meet with farmers tomorrow. I think, as well, it's very important to recognize—and if Mr. Hickson is the lead speaker tomorrow, perhaps the groups that are meeting will change their agenda. They have not extended an invitation for the Premier to speak and they have not extended an invitation for the Minister of Agriculture to speak to them tomorrow. But I will be there tomorrow to listen and talk to those farmers.

As far as the issue she raises with grains and oilseeds is concerned, I ask for your support. The crisis, the 25-year low in commodity prices, is a national issue. Traditionally, safety net programs in this country have been cost-shared on a 60-40 basis. I ask you to stand behind me, to go to Ottawa and advocate for Ottawa to stand up and make sure Ontario farmers get their fair share of money to ensure we are there to help grain and oilseeds farmers and all farmers in this province.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today UNICEF released a scathing report on child poverty in Canada, in which Canada ranked near the bottom of industrialized countries, coming 19th out of 26. What a disgrace for this country; what a disgrace for this province.

Before the election, you promised to do something about child poverty. You promised to stop clawing back the national child benefit supplement from Ontario's poorest children. But just last month in the finance committee, the McGuinty Liberals voted against our motion to end the clawback in your upcoming budget. Minister, ending the clawback would be the single best thing you

could do to eliminate child poverty in this province. Will you keep your promise to stop taking the baby bonus money out of the mouths of Ontario's poorest children?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I am happy to respond to this. I'm very pleased to say that in a year and a half, the McGuinty government has turned the Ministry of Community and Social Services around, from having been a punching bag of that last government here for the last 10 years to now standing up for Ontario's most vulnerable people.

In our first budget, despite a deficit that was left to us by the last government, we came back with a 3% increase for people who are our most poor, people on social assistance, either on Ontario disability or on Ontario welfare. We have come forward and eliminated some of the most punitive rules, like liens on homes in order to apply for welfare and the lifetime ban after fraud. Those were things that were a hallmark of the last government and that we eliminated. I have to say to the member opposite who serves as my critic, I know in our speaking publicly that this member appreciates that those gestures were not just symbolic but were an important part of showing dignity to the people who are our most vulnerable.

Mr. Prue: No, I don't accept them as anything except symbolism, because children in this province are still going hungry. Here is what nine- and 10-year-olds have to say about what it's like to go hungry and what it's like to be poor in this province. I quote them because they say it in very poignant words: "Being teased for the way you are dressed"; "Not getting to go on school trips"; "Feeling ashamed"; "Pretending that you forgot your lunch." Those are what little nine- and 10-year-old children say after you claw back their money.

Minister, you have the resources to end child poverty in Ontario; you just don't have a plan. If Manitoba can do it, if New Brunswick can do it—both have-not provinces—surely to God Ontario can do it as well. I'm asking you again on behalf of these children, will you keep the promise you made to them? Will you end the clawback today?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I'm happy to have our minister for children respond to these questions.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to add to my honourable colleague, the Minister of Community and Social Services, what we have done for children and their families to enhance their standard of living. For the first time in over a decade, we created new subsidized child care spaces. We're en route to creating 4,000 new spaces. We made more families eligible for child care subsidies by eliminating restrictions on RRSPs and RESPs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member for Nickel Belt, come to order, please.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We are investing \$8.3 million in additional—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm having difficulty—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having difficulty hearing. The member for Nickel Belt keeps shouting across, and the member for Timmins-James Bay too. I can't even get my words out.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We're also investing an additional \$8.3 million in Healthy Babies, Healthy Children; \$4.7 million in pre-school speech and language; the immunizations that the honourable member, the Minister of Health, talked about. We've invested \$4 million more in nutrition programs and, for the first time in over a decade, money for children's mental health. We've increased money for children's treatment centres; we've provided a 3% increase to these agencies as well, and we're stabilizing the child welfare system, which, by and large, does deal with children in poverty. We're doing a great deal in a coordinated fashion.

These problems weren't created overnight and they won't be solved overnight, but I'm confident we will address them in due course.

The Speaker: Before I ask the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I thought we had unanimous consent to have question period, but it seems to me we have more heckling going on and I just can't hear the members at all. I'm going to start identifying those who are disrupting us constantly and then naming those members.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the northern Ontario heritage fund is an essential tool for providing our northern communities, including the communities in Algoma-Manitoulin, with much-needed funds to aid in economic development. This fund was established, as you know, in 1989. Over the last decade, it has lost much of its focus. I would ask the minister if he could outline the new direction of the northern Ontario heritage fund.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am very pleased to announce that we have kept our commitment to refocus the northern Ontario heritage fund and return it to its original mandate of fostering job creation—something the previous Tory government failed to do.

Two weeks ago, in Sault Ste. Marie, I was joined by David Oraziotti, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, and I was delighted to announce the details of the six new targeted NOHFC programs. Whether it be the Enterprises North job creation program, the northern Ontario youth internship and co-op program, the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program, the small business energy conservation program, the emerging technologies program or the infrastructure and community development program, we are confident that these six new programs will help create the type of jobs we want in northern Ontario.

Mr. Brown: These programs are important and significant news for northern Ontario, but both you and I know, Minister, that we will need more resources to deal with the significant problem of youth out-migration in northern Ontario. Our young people have been forced to leave northern Ontario in great numbers. Do we have additional programs that would help our young people either stay or return to northern Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: My colleague raises a very serious issue for northern Ontario. Under the previous government's watch, northern Ontario experienced a 19% youth out-migration rate. In addition to the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program and the northern Ontario youth internship and co-op program, the northern Ontario grow bonds business loan program that I mentioned earlier will also be an important tool to help businesses grow and increase jobs.

I will also be asking the newly formed and recently announced northern development councils to further look at ways we can help stop the flow of our youth out of northern Ontario.

Our northern prosperity plan is working, and I look forward to sharing more positive results with this House in the very near future.

1610

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Some days ago, the government announced they would spend \$400 million to entice more gamblers to go to the Windsor casino. In this House, the Minister of Health has actually defended this expenditure, even as he has squeezed hospitals to the bone and ignored their legitimate requests for the operating funding they need to serve patients.

Last week the Toronto Star and the Kitchener-Waterloo Record both reported a story about Janice Fraser. Janice Fraser is my constituent. For months now she has endured excruciating pain that could be alleviated by surgery on her bladder and the installation of a neurostimulator, which would cost about \$7,500.

Janice has only one kidney. She lost her other kidney because of an infection five years ago. Her doctor has written that her condition is approaching a critical level. He fears that without this surgery she may lose her only remaining kidney. The Toronto Western Hospital can only perform 12 of these procedures a year and Janice is 32nd on the waiting list.

My question is this: Does the minister find it acceptable that Janice Fraser may have to wait more than two years for this surgery that she so desperately needs?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, the honourable member will know that it's not appropriate for the Minister of Health to have a discussion with respect to any individual case. With respect to the honourable member's assertion with respect to funding for hospitals, however, I think it's important to remind the member of two important facts.

The first is that, since coming to office 16 or 17 months ago, our government has invested more than \$1.7 billion of new resources in Ontario's hospitals, and secondly, our operating resources this year for Ontario's hospitals are fully \$700 million more than your very party's Magna budget proposed for hospitals this year.

I think this really does reflect, in addition, the broad investments we've made in the community sector and, likewise, that for the first time in a long time the people of Ontario have a government that is investing across the breadth of health care with a view toward making sure that all pieces work better together.

Mr. Arnott: This is not the first time I've raised Janice's condition with the minister. In fact, I've written the minister no less than six times asking him to intervene and help. He has ignored my letters, just as he has ignored Janice. I would ask him to show some compassion.

I have given the minister a copy of Janice's file again today and I would implore the minister to do what Ernie Eves would have done and respond today that he will look into Janice's case and commit to the House that he will ensure that the hospital has enough funding to eliminate the waiting list for all patients waiting for neurostimulators. Will he do that today?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member suggests that the Minister of Health should personally intervene in each individual case. Of course, across the breadth of the Ontario health care system, every single day there are 250,000 employees who are involved in making important decisions on behalf of patients. Ms. Fraser is no different than others. Her doctor, of course, has been involved in that circumstance.

The honourable member has corresponded on this subject.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: With all due respect, I'm working hard to answer your question. If you'd listen, what you would hear is that the ministry has been in communication with the hospital on this subject. We take all of these concerns that come across the way seriously, and across the breadth of government, of course, there are many of them. We're working hard to address all the health care needs of Ontarians. We've had a \$2.9-billion investment in health care this year, and I can confirm for the honourable member that we'll continue to work on Ms. Fraser's behalf to see that she gets the surgery as quickly as it can be provided.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Chairman of the Management Board of Cabinet. You don't get many questions. I'd like to give you one today.

Minister Phillips, last October you killed a deal to move the Archives of Ontario into a facility that would have protected the province's irreplaceable historical records. At that time, you assured the people of Ontario

that you would work to protect those archives. Yet, as of today, nothing has been accomplished.

The Archives of Ontario have been valued at approximately \$250 million. Every year they lose about \$13 million of their value. But that's not the question. The important thing is that this is our history. This is what the people of Ontario want to preserve, and it is being degraded. I ask you, Minister Phillips, would you please share with this House your plan to save the Archives of Ontario from any more unnecessary decay?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It's an important question. We're doing two things. One is, I spent, I think, an hour today with the chief archivist, reviewing with her and her staff all of the things that we need to be doing to preserve the integrity of our archives. I said to her, "Are we doing what's appropriate here? Should we be doing any more? Are we protecting the archives in terms of fire and mould and preservation?" I think we are doing, in the short term, all the things that she would recommend.

In the long term, of course, we need a new facility. We need a new facility that will be the facility for the next 50 years, or 100 years perhaps. What we're doing there is—I'm working with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. We are looking at the best long-term solution. We're working with the archives, and I expect over the next few months we will be proceeding with a proposal to provide a permanent new long-term facility for the archives.

So in the short term, I had a meeting today at noon for an hour dealing with the short-term problems, and I'm working with PIR for the long-term solution.

Mr. Prue: Minister, with the greatest of respect, since last October you have been saying the same exact words. Since last October in this province, we have lost many of our archives and the value of those archives. They continue to decay. It is not good enough, I would suggest to you, that you stand before this House today and say that all you're doing is studying it some more and that in a couple of more months you're going to have an answer. In the mere time of this question and your answer, we have lost some \$50 to \$100 worth of archives in this province. That's the reality of every minute: We lose \$24.72 while you dither.

I say to you again, we cannot replace many of these resources. Do you have a plan—that's what I have to ask—to save our history? Will you act to preserve these archives, and will you share with this House today what your plan is today and in two months' time?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I guess you wrote the question before you heard my answer. I repeat for the public, today at noon for perhaps an hour I met with the chief of our archives and her staff to review all of the things that we should be doing in the short term. It is going to take us probably a couple of years before we find a permanent long-term solution. The member wants to know what we are doing. I reviewed exactly what we are doing in terms of dealing with the short-term problems. In terms of the long term—and let's recognize that the public expects

that we will provide a permanent long-term solution, but we will do it in the most cost-effective manner. They expect that of us. That's why I've asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to work with our ministry to find the best long-term solution. I think those are both things that the public would expect: the short-term solution and the long-term solution. Both of those things are well underway and, in my opinion, are being done in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Children's mental health is receiving more and more well-deserved attention in the media and in our communities. This issue is one that needs to be talked about and discussed, because we need to destigmatize mental illness in Ontario. As you are well aware, children's mental health funding has not kept pace with the demand. In my community, the result of the former government's inaction has been long wait lists and troubled children and youth not receiving the care they need. What are we doing to improve this situation, Minister?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The McGuinty government has provided the first significant increase in children's mental health in over 12 years: \$25 million for 2004-05 and \$38 million in 2005-06. As you know, half of this new funding went to a much-needed boost to retain and recruit staff, and the other half went to help create and expand more than 200 community programs, including investments in Ottawa that totalled over \$600,000. These programs will target young people with social and behavioural problems, mental health and psychiatric disorders and those already involved or at risk of being involved with youth justice and child protection systems. Whether it's bullying in schools or depression or anxiety disorders, this is a much-needed investment to tackle these problems that were ignored for a very long time.

1620

Mr. McNeely: What mechanisms have you put in place to identify priorities and ensure that the money goes to the highest priority? I know that our community was quite excited about a new rural outreach program run out of our Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario that will specialize in psychological services, but I know there are many needs still out there. Given the many needs and services under the children's mental health umbrella, what groups might have priority in getting a share of the funding?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: What we did for half of this new money is that we went to the communities and we asked them and parent representatives what the special children's mental health needs were in the communities. They came back with excellent proposals. The overarching goal of these new investments was to

strengthen the capacity of the sector to respond to existing and emerging needs, to enhance the sector's capacity to provide a continuum of mental health services, and to support children and youth with mental health needs as they move from one service to another. Coordination of services was the goal, and the communities came through.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act/ Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last dealt with this issue, the member for Trinity-Spadina had the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's 4:22, it's Tuesday afternoon, and I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. I know how much you love this channel, because most of you are happy and eager to participate, at least by viewing, to know what we have to say. I'm glad to share my knowledge with all of our citizens of Ontario.

I want to continue with my theme. The theme of my talk on Bill 167 was divided into two parts: where the minister makes reference to the whole idea of conferring respect to our education activists and our education workers; and another member who spoke, from Sault Ste. Marie, talked about a new approach, a new Liberal approach to the way we do business. These were the two themes. I want to elaborate on them, because I think it indeed speaks to the new Liberal *modus operandi* that I want to make reference to.

The new *modus operandi* of the Liberal Party unfolds something like this: The Minister of Education, in response to a Conservative question on transportation, had the temerity to stand up and say that all the boards across Ontario are getting a 2% increase, that every board is getting a 2% increase, and then he proceeds to say that some boards are even getting up to an 11% increase.

You understand, Speaker. I'm glad you have the chair again, because and you I were having this cozy discussion last week. The Minister of Education, you remember, has got a big education heart, right? He tells it like it is and he doesn't squirm at anything. He just talks straight: the reality versus appearances. There was a famous writer called Pirandello in the 1920s who wrote so very much about issues having to do with the themes of reality and appearances. Much of what he used to speak about is that things are not what they seem. So when you listen to the Minister of Education, remember

Pirandello, and remember that things are not what they seem.

Let me tell you the truth about what the Minister of Education didn't say versus what he said. Every board across the province indeed got a 2% increase, and some boards are going to get an increase but the reality is that 30 boards are getting a decrease, in the years 2005 and 2006. He didn't say that. He did not speak to the fact that this coming year, 30 boards will be losing money. Even though they got a 2% increase, 30 boards are going to get a decrease in the year 2005.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's the enrolment numbers.

Mr. Marchese: The enrolment numbers? This is novel. This is very novel, because we are going to get some Liberals to stand up in their two minutes and say, "The reason they're not getting transportation dollars is because of enrolment," meaning a drop in enrolment. Now, now, my friends.

The Minister of Education was going to do a review of transportation. All the boards expected more money, not a whole whopping 30 boards getting a decrease, some of them in the order of 50% or 60%. Can you believe that? And they don't flinch. You don't have the minister flinching. You don't have any of these Liberal members, the rump on the left of me, flinching at all. They are quite happy, in their own arrogant way, to say, "Oh, come on, this has got to do with enrolment numbers." It's unbelievable.

Most of the boards affected are Roman Catholic boards, and most of these boards are angry as hell. You don't know how angry they are. What surprises me is that these Liberals are not getting the letters from these Catholic boards who are infuriated by what is happening.

The government, through the Minister of Education, promised a review. The government said, "This is a draft," that the transportation funding is a draft. But I argued with him on many different occasions, "How could it be a draft if some boards are getting an increase and 30 boards are getting a decrease as of September?" Some boards are getting money this year for the increase they will get in 2005, and the rest will follow in 2005. But you've got the Minister of Education standing up and saying that everybody is getting an increase. He makes no reference to the fact that 30 boards, mostly Catholic, French-language and Catholic boards, are going to get whacked, and badly, to the extent that they are worried about their ability to hold on to many of their students.

How could many of these Liberals sit here and listen to me and not flinch at that or somehow explain it as if the Minister of Education is correct when he says they're all getting an increase? You understand, Speaker; that's the new Liberal approach: "We contrive, we often connive even, but we do contrive." That's the politics of the Liberal Party that I find so very distasteful.

The new Liberal approach to funding: whine for federal money. I have never seen a party whine more than they do. I thought the Tories whined about not getting enough federal dollars, but to see the Liberals

whine for more as the new Liberal approach to leadership? I find that so sorrowful, so pitiful. The new leadership quality of the Liberal Party is whining. First of all, flex your muscles, and if it doesn't work, whine some more. Do you find that a quality you can admire in the Liberal Party?

You remember, Speaker, when we were in government, in the worst recession we have seen since the Great Depression, we said to the federal Tories and Liberals, "How could you cut our transfer payments in the order of \$1 billion in the worst recession?" Poor Bob Rae was saying, "How could you cut money in a recession?" when our welfare payments went from \$3 billion or \$2 billion up to \$6 billion. They cut our transfer payments for social programs to half, and we didn't have any money. And do you know what Tories and Liberals used to say? Tories and Liberals used to say to the NDP, "You don't have a revenue problem; you have a spending problem." That's what Liberals used to say. That's what Tories used to say. Then the Tories get into government with a good economy and they whine like whimpering children, and now the Liberals, with a good economy, are whining like whimpering wimps for more money.

It's so distasteful, and what's so distasteful about what they are doing is that they have the economic tools to be able to raise the money, but because they are so afraid to break their promises, over and over again, of not increasing income taxes or taxes of any sort, because they are so afraid, they have waged a battle, a ferocious battle, with the federal government to get more money from the federal government. It's just so, so silly. When I see the Liberals doing this or expressing themselves with such strong leadership qualities such as whimpering and whining, I just don't see it.

1630

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Everything is fine with you, eh?

Mr. Marchese: Oh, everything is fine for me, Richard Patten from Ottawa Centre. I can't believe the member from Ottawa Centre could say, "Everything is fine, eh?" He's been around here for so many years, understands the politics of how we do things and knows that we have a good economy. He knows he's got the tools to be able to raise more, but he is saying, "No, we can't do it. We have to go to the feds for money."

So he says, "Everything is fine." Of course, everything is not fine. But you have a better economy than New Democrats did in 1990, 1991 and 1992, and you refuse to use your tools.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): The NDP wants a tax increase.

Mr. Marchese: Now we've got my friend from the rump, the member from Guelph, saying that the NDP wants a tax increase. No, the member from Guelph doesn't want a tax increase, but she would like money for universities and colleges, she wants the money for child care, she wants the money for the CAT scans. All of these dollars come from—guess who? The federal government. So what she's saying is, "We don't want to tax,

but we want the federal government to tax and give us the money."

What a silly, silly way to do politics. Either you are in politics to govern or you just get out of the way and let somebody else govern. If you don't want to use the tools that you have at your disposal to raise the money, get out of office. Just get out of office. That's what I say to the member from Guelph. If you don't want to use the tools that you've got, get out of office.

Mrs. Sandals: Rosie, you've changed your mind. You're waffling.

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, did you hear the member from Guelph? "Marchese is waffling." I love it when Liberals talk like that, because it's amusing. Nobody vacillates better, nobody sits on that fence better than Liberals—nobody does. So when they accuse the NDP of waffling, it's just so amusing. I'd like to hear more of it, in fact.

Mrs. Sandals: OK. You're the guys who voted against getting rid of the private school tax credit. There's a major waffle.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Guelph never ceases to amuse me. She will have two minutes, of course, to respond to my commentary.

Moving on to Bill 167, to the member from Ottawa Centre, just to help you out, and my buddy Jean-Marc from Glengarry, I think most of you understand that in 2001 the Tories dictated that all collective agreements in Ontario would expire August 31, 2004. Why would the Liberal government want to change that? Why would they want to change three-year agreements to two or four? Why would four-year agreements be better than three-year agreements? Does it make any sense to anybody watching this program that the Liberals have an interest in changing three-year agreements, instituted by the Tories, so that they can have either two or four? Why?

I will tell you the politics of it. The Conservative collective agreements would have expired August 31, 2004, smack in the middle of a provincial election. Understand this: The election is going to be in October. Collective agreements would expire August 31, 2004. The Liberals are frightened to death that they would have a collective agreement expiring before an election, where teachers would want to know what it is that the Liberal government has to offer by way of benefits, by way of class size, by way of salaries. So the Liberals cleverly and politically say, "How do we get out of such a political bind?" They get out of it by introducing Bill 167, which has two-year agreements. A two-year agreement would expire in 2006, a year before the provincial election, as a way of dealing with any eventual political problem that might arise, or 2008, if they have four-year agreements. Either way, they avoid the politics of having to negotiate with teachers before the election. That's what this bill is all about.

What's ironic and somewhat contradictory, I would say, is that Mr. Kennedy, when he was in opposition, said the following—and I quote, because I quoted him last week. This is what he said about the Tories trying to set

collective agreements so that they wouldn't coincide with political elections that would affect the Conservatives. Before the election, the Liberals slammed the Tories for trying to put off any potential teacher strikes until after the election, and Gerard chided them during the debate in 2001, saying, "Today, they'll say, 'We demand that there be a three-year contract. We demand that that happen so there are no untoward activities around the time of the next election.'"

You understand what he is saying. He knows exactly what he is doing with Bill 167. He attacked the Tories for doing what he is now doing with Bill 167. Most Liberals either don't have a clue, don't realize, and if you tell them, don't care. Why would they want to care? Why would they pretend to know or even not to know? They don't want to know that the intent of this bill is to avoid the politics of a contract expiring August 31, 2004. That is what this bill is all about.

Before the election, Liberals said that dictating the length of contracts was heavy-handed. That is what Gerard said. Gerard said that dictating the length of contracts was heavy-handed. So dictating a two-year contract or a four-year contract is not heavy-handed, but dictating a three-year contract is? Do you understand, rump, what this means? Do you understand what that means? It means that the Liberals are doing the same thing the Tories did before.

Here is his quote: "You think you're going to fix problems in education, many of them of your own making, by ordering people around. You're going to boss them, you're going to make them do things and, in this case, you're going to get three-year contracts just because you say so." That's what Gerard, your minister with a heart, your minister who says, "We are conferring respect to teachers," is saying. The same criticism that he levelled against the Tories, I level against him today, because he is no different than the Tories were in the past.

Included in this bill are other things that I believe are a bit heavy-handed. Teacher development accounts: He says that, where people negotiate agreements, they will be able to get teacher development money, and if they don't have an agreement, they will not get teacher development money. Now, why would you not provide teacher development for every teacher on the basis that it's pedagogically important and good versus, "We give teacher development money only to the boards that agreed to the terms that we set out in Bill 167"? How could Liberals live with that? If they read this bill, how could they live with this bill? How could they live with this measure that says, "Only boards that agree with me will get money for teacher development; the others will not"? How could any sensible, reasonable human being, including Liberals, say that? I just don't know. I just don't understand it.

They're also saying that there will be actual salary support and that, from now on, the above increases will be based on actual average salaries, ending a practice of artificially lower benchmarks. Here is the problem with that. He offers 2% to teachers, and he says that with that 2% we're going to end the practice of artificially lower

benchmarks. How does he do that when Rozanski, People for Education, and Hugh Mackenzie, as an economist, say that these contracts, money for teacher salaries, are short by approximately \$600 million? How could this 2% solve that benchmark problem that has been set so low since 1997?

Recognizing that the benchmarks were so low, the minister includes \$10 million to help them deal with those lower benchmarks. How does \$10 million deal with the fact that Dr. Rozanski, commissioned by the Tories, says that that fund for teachers is \$600 million short, as a result of which, whenever contracts were signed by boards and teachers, they had to dip into other program dollars to be able to pay for collective agreements? That problem continues today. Collective agreements have been signed not on the basis of what is in that teacher line but on the basis of taking money from other programs to give money for teacher contracts. That's wrong.

1640

The government recognizes that those benchmarks are low, and that money needs to be given to bring them up. But this government does not do that. It recognizes that they're low and introduces a little measure that says that \$10 million is going to be given to lift the benchmarks. But \$10 million is short by about 590 million bucks. Ten million bucks does nothing.

This bill, in my view, does very little to bring about the kind of peace we're looking at—very little. The two-year and four-year agreements, in my view, are no different politically than three-year agreements. There's no difference whatsoever. If boards or teachers refuse to have a 2% increase and opt for a 2.5% increase, the minister forces them to do a public accounting of where they're getting that extra half a per cent increase. If they negotiate more than a half per cent, they have to do a public accounting of where the money beyond 2% came from. He's going to shame boards by saying to them, "If you do more than the 2% I offer you, you're going to have to tell us where you have taken that money from."

He knows where they've taken the money from before. He knows where boards had to make up for those salary increases in some way because of the Tories' underfunding. He knows that. And knowing that, you'd think he would be a little more helpful.

This bill is no different from the previous Tory bill of three-year contracts. It's the same politics. I decry it now as I did then, and I think this new approach to doing politics is wrong.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Since our election, and indeed well before it while in opposition, those of us within our government have each formed a personal and special bond with our partners in education: teachers, parents, students and boards. Our government has worked hard to build an atmosphere of peace and stability in Ontario's education system. That means fostering and living within an atmosphere of respect and co-operation.

Bill 167 allows negotiations to take place in an atmosphere conducive to fair collective bargaining. Our record

as a government shows very strong increases to publicly funded education. We want boards to negotiate with teacher federations. We want them to work together on long-term planning and to focus on student achievement rather than on negotiating strategies.

It sounds, from the shifting focus of the stream-of-consciousness remarks of the member from Trinity–Spadina, that his intent is to suggest a negotiation model to Ontario's educators similar to that of the National Hockey League. The Minister of Education, however, is interested in the same thing as Ontario's hockey fans: stability for all parties, multi-year funding and fairness in the process.

The member for Trinity–Spadina must think that Ontario's taxpayers are little more than sponges to be squeezed for cash any time a stakeholder runs short of funds. This is a government committed to staying within its means, even as it reinvests in Ontario's public education system. Bill 167 fosters healthy working relationships among education stakeholders, and that's why I feel it deserves speedy passage and immediate implementation.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I want to congratulate the member for Trinity–Spadina on once again giving a great speech. To be honest, I've heard him give better, but it was a good effort.

I was shocked that the member for Trinity–Spadina didn't talk about the transportation cuts being floated by the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty—the member for Lanark–Carleton knows full well; we met with the local school board the other day. They want to take the public school board from \$321 per student and cut it back to \$305, and they want to take the Catholic school board—listen to this, Speaker—from \$502 to \$276. The member for Lanark–Carleton and I asked a question in the House. All the Liberal members from Ottawa have been silent on this cloud of doom over our school system. They are the quiet ones who, if this had been the previous government, would have gone berserk.

But then they come up with this new option. The government says they'll come up with what they call scenario G. They want to take the Ottawa–Carleton Catholic school board from \$502 per student and only cut them back to \$419 per student. It's like they push them in front of an oncoming bus and then at the last minute say, "We'll pull half of you out of the way of the bus." Thanks. Thanks for nothing. I don't think—

Mr. Patten: How come it's more than the district board? It should be the same.

Mr. Baird: I think it should be the same. I think you should bring the public board up to the same as the Catholic board. You shouldn't be punishing students who attend our Catholic education system. And for the Premier not to have the gonads to answer the member from Lanark–Carleton's and my question is terrible and disgraceful.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Nepean–Carleton to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr. Baird: "Gonads"? OK, I withdraw "gonads" and replace it with "guts."

The Acting Speaker: That's better.

Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Sandals: I would be delighted to reply to the comments from the member for Trinity–Spadina, and also for Nepean–Carleton, because we seem to have segued on to the transportation formula review. While that isn't the content of the bill, it certainly was the content of the remarks from the member, so I would like to talk about that.

What's the problem here? The problem here is that when the Tories brought in their new funding model, they didn't actually create a transportation funding model. They gave boards whatever they happened to be spending before. So what we had was each of 72 boards funded by the province at a different level of service, with no consistent provincial level of service.

If you happened to live, as I did, in Upper Grand, in Guelph, and to be a trustee there, what you would have found is that with the Tory level of funding for transportation, we were spending almost \$1 million a year extra above what the Tories gave us. You might think that's wasteful, but we could not, according to the Education Act, take a single student off the bus, and we could not give a lower level of service. It would have been illegal to give a lower level of service, yet we were \$1 million underfunded. Other boards were getting funding for a much higher level of service and running a surplus on transportation to boot.

So what Rozanski recommended was that we re-examine the funding model. The Tories did not have the intestinal fortitude to do that. Our government said, "There is a problem." We are fixing the problem. Does it cause some distress? Yes. But what we are doing is coming up with a consistent funding model for transportation in the province of Ontario for the first time.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on the member for Trinity–Spadina's leadoff speech. I heard part of it the other day, and then of course he finished off today. I have to remind everyone that he is someone who has done a very good job in his role as education critic for the third party, both with our party when we were in power and now of course with the new government.

One of the things I would like to react to very briefly is the fact that the member from Guelph–Wellington talks about the transportation formula, and yes, she is right: When we did the new funding formula in education, one piece of the student-focused funding pie was the transportation portion of that. I worked for a period of about two years as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, and that was always something we were very concerned about.

One of the things that happened at that time was that because there wasn't an actual formula in place, each year we would have to top it up. I can remember

specifically meeting with the school bus operators of the province. Every year they would go after \$20 million or \$25 million to buy new buses—the increased costs they were facing—and the government of the day would hand that money out to the different boards.

What I haven't found out, and I'd like to get this information from the Ministry of Education, is how much the government of the day is actually spending on transportation. That means school bus transportation in all the 72 boards in the province, and what the increase is since we were in government. I would like to get that information from someone, if they could give that out today.

1650

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Trinity-Spadina. You have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Marchese: I thank the four friends and foes who have spoken on this. I want to say to the member from Mississauga West, who uses very quiet, almost mellifluous tones from time to time, that I remind him that Kennedy attacked the Tories when they introduced their bill in 2001 and said that their bill for three-year contracts was very political. I accuse him of the same thing today with this Bill 167. It's the same thing. I don't know what he's getting at in terms of what I was saying about negotiations or contracts. I'm telling him that Kennedy was not happy when the Tories did what they did and I'm not happy with what he is doing with Bill 167, because it's done for political reasons.

On the issue of transportation, member from Guelph, you got it all wrong, my friend. The Tories never introduced a funding formula. The Liberals were going to introduce a new funding model, and they did. It's called Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation, and this new equitable allocation is shafting, whacking, about 30 boards, some of whom are going to get 50%, 60% less as a result of this new formula that the member from Guelph is so proud of.

I'm telling you, no one is micromanaging better than Mr. Kennedy. He accused the Tories of micromanaging. He's doing it so, so well. "Boards will not have the money to cover the cost of salaries, and by forcing them to make detailed reports, Kennedy is hoping to shift the blame away from the Liberal government and on to school boards. Before the election, Liberals claimed this sort of micromanagement was bad. 'The Harris-Eves government tries to run 5,000 schools from Queen's Park. We will ensure that school boards have the resources and the flexibility in spending those resources to respond to local needs.'" OK, Gerard. "Now they're engaged in the same tactics as the Conservatives, creating time-consuming accountability measures that do little for students but shift political blame away from the government." That's what they're doing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I will be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill. I'm

pleased to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 167. Bill 167 is simply a very small bill—as you can see, it's one page—and it allows for either a two- or four-year term for negotiating teacher agreements. Why did we come to the point that we have this legislation? After a lot of discussion—and we consulted quite widely. We consulted with teachers, parents and administrators, and they wanted to see a better, more consistent approach to bargaining. They also wanted to go to what we could consider long-term funding that's in place, so they have better planning and they can better manage the needs that are going to come up in a year or two.

Unfortunately, we have to change the act because right now you can have boards going into teachers' contracts after a year, after two years, after three years, and we don't have a consistent model. That's what this bill is all about.

I've heard some interesting interpretations before me here by some of the members of the opposition. Basically, all this bill does is try to achieve more stability in our schools. It tries to also achieve a consistent, clear pattern of negotiations that have to go on in the province. That's simply all it does.

We have put into place a number of areas of accountability, such as changing the Audit Act so that we now have a Provincial Auditor who can actually go in and see if we're getting value for money in our education system. We have a wonderful education system that's publicly funded. Unfortunately, sometimes we don't have the mechanism of checks and balances that I believe the 21st century requires because of the need and the cost of this system.

I am a little bit perplexed at the opposition members bringing in all different types of discussions in regard to this bill. One of the undertakings we have is to review and to re-examine the funding model, the whole issue of what the inequities are in our system. We have a lot of them because, when all of the dramatic changes were taking place under the previous administration, they didn't quite get it right and it created a lot of problems.

Some things they did get right. Many people are suggesting that the curriculum certainly is a good curriculum and there are aspects of it that are excellent. Unfortunately, the bulk of the way they modelled the funding formula created a great deal of distress throughout the system, and it doesn't do our education system any good to have constant battles with our educators. That's what we want to alleviate. We don't want that. We're in partnership, as a government, with our educators. We can agree to disagree with the members of the opposition when it comes to the details, because they obviously have their own interpretation. But I can certainly tell you that the intent of our government is to create a stronger education system, to make it more accountable to the public and to work hand in hand with the educators. Why? Because they are the ones who will inspire and maintain the standard of excellence in our system. Without our educators and the work they do, we would not have as good a system as we have, in spite of the problems of the past.

The need to progress our system of public education is truly, I believe, moved forward by this bill, because we now have a system that will allow for two to four years in negotiating, and then long-term funding.

Mr. Racco: The objective of Bill 167 is to promote co-operation and minimize or eliminate strikes. That's why I'm a little surprised at the comments from the opposition. In fact, under the Tories, kids in Ontario lost 25 million school days to strikes and labour disruptions. The Tory government practices also led to the closure of 650 schools. We cannot let our children down like the PCs did. In fact, many taxpayers from Thornhill and Concord lost working days to deal with the strikes that the Tories encouraged.

We are committed to improving student achievement and giving our children the tools they need to succeed. Creating stability in our schools is one way we can help create a supportive environment for both teachers and students. My colleague's bill, An Act to amend the Education Act, 2005, continues to build the atmosphere of peace and stability that our schools need.

1700

The previous government's legislation called for three-year terms for all teachers' agreements. Our legislation would allow for either two- or four-year terms, with strong encouragement for the latter. This allows negotiations to take place in an environment that is conducive to fair collective bargaining in a strong, funded education system. This approach will allow school boards and the government to do better long-term planning and to focus on improving student achievement rather than negotiations.

Bill 167, if it passes, would repeal and re-enact section 277.11 of the Education Act to provide that collective agreements with teacher bargaining units entered into on or after September 1, 2004, shall have two- or four-year terms and shall commence on September 1 of the year in which the previous collective agreement expires.

This legislation is a key step in supporting the significant efforts we already have underway to help sustain peace and stability in Ontario schools. This approach means that school boards and the government can better plan for costs. All parties will be better able to focus on improving student achievement, rather than being distracted by negotiations and strikes.

We have already announced new provincial initiatives that will support teacher negotiations, such as new supports through a change in benchmarks for funding salary increases and incentives for longer contracts and ones that meet provincial salary guidelines. We have initiated a new dialogue on provincial policies concerning workload issues to seek out long-term solutions.

Our plan includes guaranteeing multi-year funding for boards that enter into two- or four-year agreements. Even when faced with a deficit, this government is proposing to increase salary benchmarks by 2% for 2004-05, 2% for 2005-06, and for four-year agreements, 2.5% for 2006-07 and 3% for 2007-08. So there's a bonus if they go for four years. Increases will be based on actual average

salaries of teachers. This is why the government will be providing an additional \$10 million to supplement the 2% increase to salary benchmarks announced earlier this year. It's better than what the Tories did.

Our legislation would allow for either two- or four-year terms, ensuring that negotiations are undertaken in a depoliticized environment that is good for both collective bargaining and public education. We are respectful of the local collective bargaining process. We are not prohibiting or limiting local negotiations. We want to make progress in education, but not on the backs of teachers or other educators. Investments have been made to support students and teachers for the 2004-05 school year, including \$90 million as a first step in reducing primary class size, \$110 million in the student success program and \$44 million for intensive teacher development.

We are also prepared to look at long-term solutions to reduce elementary teacher workload by increasing the number of art, music and gym teachers. We have a constructive dialogue ongoing with secondary teachers to consider changes that are in the best interests of students.

Since our government came to power, we have worked to build a genuine partnership with the education community. We took the time to have lengthy discussions with people in the sector. They voiced their concerns; we listened and responded. Despite the significant financial difficulties facing the province of Ontario that the Tories left us with, we have invested heavily in public education. We share their aspirations to work and learn in a peaceful and stable environment. This stability should not be an aspiration; it should be a pillar. We are committed to working together to improve publicly funded education. Ultimately, longer term agreements mean more stability for students, parents, teachers and education workers.

We care about our children. We care about their education. This bill, along with the additional increased funding from the Ministry of Education, puts our money where our mouth is.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This government wants to talk about democratic reform, and I'm the democratic reform critic. They've brought forward a number of bills. Most of them have been window dressing and really don't have a lot of impetus in terms of what's happening in this province in terms of trying to renew our forum here in the Legislative Assembly.

This bill leads to cynicism on the part of the electorate like no other bill does because basically what it says is this: You can have a collective agreement that terminates on September 1 or August 31, 2006, or you can have one that terminates on August 31, 2008, but you can't have one that terminates on August 31, 2007. Guess why? Because they have another bill in their great democratic reform package that says there's going to be an election on October 4, 2007. So the whole logic behind this bill is gerrymandering the legislation for their political advantage. This is what this is all about. This is gerrymandering the negotiations of a labour union and school

board in order to give themselves—the government, the Liberals—a political advantage.

This is so counter to the Premier's statements that "We want to have more people vote. We don't want people to be so cynical about elections." Talk about cynicism. That's what this bill should be entitled: An Act to increase cynicism in the education system rules of Ontario.

Mr. Marchese: I've heard the words "peace and stability" so many times from the members from Sarnia and Thornhill that I want to throw up. If they don't stop saying "peace and stability," one of these days I'm likely to vomit in this Legislature on the other side of the assembly. They really talk about what the intent of this bill is. It's to avoid a strike. That is what they say. They want long-term stability to avoid a strike.

When Gerard Kennedy spoke at the time the Tories had their bill for three-year contracts, he said that was bad. Now, why would it be bad for the Tories to seek peace and stability for three years, but if the Liberals want peace and stability in two or four years, that's good? Do you understand what I'm saying? Speaker, I know your wife would understand, as a teacher. It doesn't make any sense. These are presumed to be reasonable-minded people, possibly intelligent; I don't know. But if three-year contracts are bad, what makes four-year contracts better? You follow? If three-year contracts are bad, why are two-year contracts better? It makes absolutely no sense. They continue to stand up defending this notion of peace and stability, disregarding the fact that Kennedy opposed three-year contracts on the basis that that was politics. When Liberals do it—oh, no; Liberals don't engage in politics. Only Tories are evil, and New Democrats. But when Liberals do it, they've got a good heart.

Applause.

Mr. Marchese: And they clap for themselves. They really want to work together with teachers because they love them and they want peace and stability—throw-up kind of remarks. It's really tough. Then they say, "We want to give actual salaries." This is—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Marchese: We're running out of time so fast? We'll have another opportunity to do another two minutes.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's my pleasure to make a couple of comments with respect to Bill 167. I want to thank my colleagues for their support on this particular piece of legislation.

It's interesting. I hear the opposition members here talk about the micromanaging of the Minister of Education. If they had taken some time to work with the teachers of this province over the last decade, maybe they would have had a better relationship with them. The NDP ripped up collective agreements in the early 1990s. I can tell you, I was one of those individuals working in a school who had my collective agreement ripped up. Minister Snobelen set out to create a crisis in education. That is not the kind of relationship that we are building with the teachers of this province.

1710

So I'm proud that Bill 167 is going to give more options for—go ahead, Mr. Marchese—

Mr. Marchese: For what?

Mr. Oraziotti: —for peace and stability in education: capping class sizes, school renewal funding, PLP elimination, reviewing the College of Teachers. We are putting more money into reviewing the funding formula.

Mr. Dunlop: You're blaming the feds. Fed-bashing.

Mr. Oraziotti: Mr. Dunlop, come on.

We are going to be putting more funding into education than Rozanski recommended. Some \$1.8 billion is missing from the education funding in this province. Over \$2 billion will find its way back into the education system because of the leadership of the Minister of Education, and because of our government and our leadership on the issues in education.

While the opposition members will accuse the minister of micromanaging, I'm going to commend the Minister of Education for his leadership in rebuilding the relationship with the teachers of this province, the trust and renewal of that relationship that is long overdue. The education system is certainly going to be much better off under our government, and so are the children of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: One last question and comment.

Mr. Baird: I see my friend from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Marchese: A good labour guy.

Mr. Baird: "A good labour guy," Rosario says. The head of his union, Donna Marie Kennedy, was at our convention. The teachers' federations were at the Conservative convention. They want to build bridges and open the relationship, because they see the disaster that this government has been in education.

I was shocked that neither of these two members talked about the transportation funding cuts that loom. People say it's not fair that the public board doesn't get the same as the Catholic board, and I agree. So I looked at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, where I was educated myself, and they were getting \$321 per student for transportation. Under the two options, one of them cuts them to \$305 and the other cuts them to \$318. Instead of bringing them up, they're cutting them both. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, even when this transportation equity formula comes out, is going to get whacked, but they're only going to get whacked a little bit. This hasn't even kept up with inflation for many years, and Dalton McGuinty is going to cut back the little children on the school buses. The Catholic board, they really get whacked.

I don't think this government understands the reality of Ottawa. The city of Ottawa is four and a half times the size of the city of Toronto. My own constituency, entirely in the city of Ottawa, is twice the size of Toronto. And this government is all about Toronto—by, for and about Toronto. We had one full minister from the 416 area code; these guys have eight. Toronto, under this minister's transportation funding formula, doesn't even use all of its transportation money, and they are going to get more. Will one of these two members stand up and tell me this isn't true?

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Sarnia–Lambton. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Di Cocco: I want to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Sault Ste. Marie and Nepean–Carleton for their comments. This bill—we consulted, we listened and, ultimately, we're making some changes. That's what participatory democracy is: You consult, you listen and then you put it into action.

In the end, this bill is about improving student achievement. That's what it's about. In the end, it's about giving our children the tools they need to succeed.

Interjection.

Ms. Di Cocco: From the heckling I hear from the other side, there is obviously a *modus operandi* that the member opposite was used to, and that is, you take everything in education and make it a political football. They did that for eight years. That is the track record. I would suggest that the intent in the end—and I hope it's the intent of every member in this Legislature—is that we do this and we make changes to education to benefit the students. In the end, education is what shapes our civil society, and that's what these changes are intended to do, in spite of the comments I hear from members of the opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and talk for my 20-minute rotation on Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act, or as we refer to it on this side of the House, the contracts not to expire in 2007 act. It's as simple as that; that's what it's all about. We all know that it's not about peace and stability or any of those terms the minister has tried to use.

Before we get into that, I want to say very briefly to every member in the House, thank you for the co-operation we received on the tribute to Ernie Eves. It's a nice day in this building when we can finally all agree on something. It was nice for that gesture to be made by all three political parties here this afternoon. With that, I'd like to make a few comments on Bill 167.

First, for a government that is so proud of its education policies, I can't understand why they don't want to spend more time speaking about their education policies, especially when we have 20-minute rotations. The last rotation only took 11 minutes. We're here to debate legislation. We're supposed to be using the time to put our points across. So I'd ask the government to at least try to use the 20-minute rotations and maybe shorten up the 10-minute times. If you're proud of the legislation, if you're proud of this peace and stability legislation, Bill 167, then I think we should debate it.

There are a number of things I'd like to bring forward, speaking on behalf of our caucus—I know a number of our members would like to speak to this bill. The bill and the method by which it was finally introduced in the House are the subject of a contempt of the Legislature motion by the member from Oak Ridges, Mr. Klees, which was dealt with by the Speaker when the House

resumed in February. School boards and unions had been instructed in a letter from the minister on November 29, 2004, that the government would guarantee funding for four-year collective agreements. The directive from the minister was given without the requisite legislative authority, thereby instructing them to conduct their business in a manner contrary to existing legislation and which presumed that legislation would be introduced.

The minister has already announced the terms of the pay increases that the government wants, and that hijacks any collective bargaining process that may occur at each individual board of education. So basically, he's centralizing all the negotiations. The cost for four-year contracts is very high, and the question of how the government is planning to pay for this could be asked. We know they don't want to talk about this in the year 2007 because, as we've said earlier, that's the year they plan to have the election. But the cost of the four-year contracts, from our mathematics, is that in year one, the 2% increase would be \$238 million; in year two, another 2%, making it \$480.76 million; in year three, 2.5%, which makes it a total of \$790.279 million; and in year four, 3%, making it \$1.17 billion. The total cost is \$2.68 billion more than the current year in which they're being paid.

The government is messaging this as bringing stability and peace to the education system. How can the government imply that they are bringing peace and stability to the education system when all they are really showing is broken promises and incompetence? Legislation already exists allowing for three-year contract terms. Hence, the claim by the government that the new legislation will confer added stability is simply not true. How can there be a difference? I go back again: It's simply that the government does not want the contracts to expire in the year 2007.

1720

Class sizes have not gone down, as promised, placing more work and strain on the remaining teachers. This is not bringing stability to the classroom. The OSSTF agrees that this bill will not bring stability to the education system. In fact, they have filed a complaint of unfair labour practices with the Ontario Labour Relations Board, claiming a serious breach of protocol by Kennedy for directly communicating with the local unions and bypassing their provincial executives.

The teachers do not agree that this bill will bring stability to the education system. Ontario's public high school teachers bristled at the province's offer a few weeks ago for peace and stability in education—we keep bringing that term up—saying the move is an attempt to take away bargaining power from local districts and school boards.

As of January 28, 2005, 13 boards that have so far conducted their strike votes have voted overwhelmingly to strike. Phillip Mack, president of the Thames Valley local of the Elementary Teachers' Federation says, "It was the local's strongest-ever strike vote. This is not an example of stability and peace in the education system."

Rural and small schools are in a crisis situation and in jeopardy of closing due to the government's incompet-

ence and inability to fulfill its election promises of investing \$177 million toward rural schools. We keep hearing a lot of fancy announcements, but I haven't heard that the boards are actually receiving the money to proceed with this. Jobs will be lost due to these school closures. Children will have to move to new schools and, in some cases, travel far distances to get to their new schools. This is not an example of bringing peace and stability to the education system.

Forcing students to stay in school until the age of 18 is not going to bring stability to the education system. In fact, many of these students who are being forced to stay in school may become disruptive in the classroom, causing strain and stress to the teachers and to their fellow students.

The purpose of the Education Amendment Act, 2004, is to amend section 277.11 of the Education Act, which prescribes that all collective agreements between school boards and bargaining agents for elementary and secondary schools must have a term of three years. The new rule will prescribe that the collective agreements may, at the parties' option, have either a two- or four-year term, and must commence on September 1 of the year in which the previous agreements expire. The rule also deems collective agreements with terms that do not comply with the rule as agreements that have either a two- or four-year term and that commence on September 1 of the year in which the previous agreement expired. If the term of the collective agreement is extended by virtue of this deeming provision, the terms and conditions that operated in the last year of the agreement are also deemed to operate during the year of the deemed extension.

The former Conservative government, our government, is responsible for introducing and passing the legislation allowing for three-year collective agreements. The Liberal government is claiming that this bill will bring stability to the education sector.

The bill repeals section 277.11 of the Education Act, which governs the length of collective agreements. Bill 167 provides for two- or four-year collective bargaining agreements. The current legislation, of course, provides for three-year collective agreements, and many of them, of course, would expire during 2007. Again, we know that the government does not want that to happen.

Minister Kennedy announced that the deal between the teachers' federations had responded to the plan. The letters he sent to the presidents of local teachers' unions that outlined his plan to fund salary increases over the next four years invited them to respond to him directly rather than through their union's head office. As a result, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation filed a complaint of unfair labour practice on Wednesday, December 15, with the Ontario Labour Relations Board claiming a serious breach of protocol by Minister Kennedy for directly communicating with the local union's presidents and bypassing their provincial executive.

Again, we go back to peace and stability in the education system. That is why our education critic, Mr.

Frank Klees, introduced his act, An Act to amend the Education Act to remove political interference in collective bargaining and ensure flexibility at the local level. I believe that was bill number—I don't have it in front of me right now. It's Bill 172. It addresses the concerns of the English Catholic teachers, who would prefer a term of three years for collective agreements.

On February 22—and I want to read this into the record because I think it's important that I do that—OECTA did, in fact, put out a press release. I'd like to read into the record what they actually said concerning Mr. Klees's bill:

"Recipe for Peace: End Political Meddling in Bargaining, OECTA says

"The irony of the aptly named An Act to amend the Education Act to remove political interference in collective bargaining and ensure flexibility at the local level is not lost on Catholic Teachers, says Donna Marie Kennedy, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA). The private member's bill, introduced today"—that is, February 22—"by Frank Klees (PC Oak Ridges), would provide for a term of operation of two, three, or four years.

"Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act, currently before the Ontario Legislature, would force terms to be either two or four years if passed.

"The best way for government to ensure peace and stability in Ontario schools is to stop meddling in collective bargaining and allow local teachers and trustees to address local issues with as much versatility as possible," says Kennedy"—this is not Gerard Kennedy.

"Donna Marie Kennedy says that OECTA is encouraging the McGuinty government to permit local negotiators to craft innovative answers to local learning and working conditions that are raised during negotiations, including terms of various lengths.

"History shows that when Queen's Park micro-manages local education by interfering with bargaining, flexibility declines and peace and stability are compromised," Kennedy says.

"After the Harris government introduced Bill 160 that restricted the scope of bargaining in 1997, the number of days lost to disputes jumped dramatically." I thought I would put that non-partisan part in and read that all into the record.

What we're saying is that they don't want the interference of the government in the collective bargaining unit. We all know now that this bill has been put through for political purposes. We would ask that if the government is planning on passing Bill 167, that they take a serious look at Bill 172, which adds that third year in there, and would take what I would consider to be the partisan politics out of that particular piece of legislation.

While I've got the floor, I wanted to talk a little bit about the boards of education in the riding that I represent. I think that the boards over the years have been very well managed and, as far as I'm concerned, have done a good job. I want to talk for a moment about the Simcoe County District School Board, which is one of

the boards in the province that continues, even with the elimination of grade 13, to increase in student enrolment. Therefore, looking at school closures has not, in fact, been a major issue. There are still concerns about school closures, because some of the smaller rural communities aren't growing at the same rate. As we ask boards to do more and they need the staffing there—the secretarial staff, principals and vice-principals to work with all the legislation that is in place—the thought of school closures can, in fact, be a reality down the road.

But in my time as the MPP for Simcoe North, I believe that we've added a total of 11 major renovations and additions to rural schools in my riding. I think that speaks well for the board. They've had a staff who have looked at this very carefully. As a result, we don't have an awful lot of portables, particularly in our rural schools.

We do have some problems. We still have some of the older schools. I know that Minister Kennedy is looking at this. Of course, this is going to turn out to be billions of dollars when you look at these 100-year-old schools. But I think that we have about six of them in total that should be either renovated comprehensively or torn down and new schools built, perhaps in the same location. I would urge the government to make sure that for schools in rural parts of the province, we take a look at how they are actually being funded and look at how the construction costs can be handled effectively so that it doesn't become a detriment to the families. As you know, Mr. Speaker, most families, once they're set in a school that their parents and grandparents attended, like to keep those schools strong, and they like to keep them open. Of course, it has been a challenge for all the governments for the last 20 years to make sure we could go in that direction.

1730

I would also like to say that we talk about peace and stability in the education system. I can tell you that I attended the Orillia Winter Carnival three weekends ago. For some reason, you end up talking to a lot of different folks about different issues. I happened to talk to quite a few young people who were actually wanting to get jobs as teachers in my riding. They're people from Toronto. Some were from the north, some were from the York region board and some were just young teachers who want to teach. They want their first job. I was amazed at how professional some of these people were and how they really want to work in a county like the county of Simcoe. That says a lot for our part of the province. Obviously, as an MPP, I'm proud of my area. When I see young folks wanting to move to the area, wanting to raise families in that area, wanting to have teaching positions, wanting to have other jobs with their partners, I think it's important that I pay tribute to them today, because I think it is important that they get those jobs. I was just very proud that so many people wanted to come to our board.

I can say that, even with what we claim is the lack of peace and stability in the system, I'm happy that I don't really receive an awful lot of concerns and issues in my riding around my school boards. I would say, they do a

good job. I'd say, the staff at most of the schools do a good job.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): There are people from Owen Sound there too.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, we have people from all over the province who would like to teach in Simcoe county and work in Simcoe county. Probably they want to be politicians in Simcoe county. Who knows? But the bottom line is that they—

Mr. Leal: Wow, let's not go down that road.

Mr. Dunlop: They may some day.

The bottom line is that I'm happy with the education system. I was happy under our government, and I'm happy under Dalton McGuinty and Gerard Kennedy. I haven't seen a tremendous number of complaints and concerns. For that reason, I try to work with the board whenever I can; I try to get the proper information.

As I've said in this House before, when I was the parliamentary assistant to Janet Ecker, I kept hearing these negative comments about the lack of peace and stability. But I'd go to the schools, and that wasn't what I was hearing from the teachers; that wasn't what I was hearing from the school councils. I felt that the bulk of the teachers were happy in their jobs, and I felt that the parents felt that their children were receiving a good education. That will be the challenge of the government as more money is required for salaries, as we grow the population and as we continue to build better and better schools and more innovative ideas in education.

I am coming to the end of my time. I've tried to use the full 20 minutes, and I'm hoping that my Liberal colleagues will follow me with 20-minute rotations as well.

I do say that we won't be supporting Mr. Kennedy's Bill 167, because we felt that he has tried to politicize it. If the government decided to add Bill 172 to that mixture and have an amendment where Frank Klees's legislation could be introduced, at that time our caucus would probably take a serious look at supporting Kennedy's bill. But at this time, we think it's not about peace and stability; it's about having contracts not expire in the year 2007. I think that's what we are hearing over and over again. That's what the OECTA is saying. That's what our critics are saying in this House, and that's what I'm trying to say here today, that we need to take a more serious look at a lot of other things in this House, as opposed to worrying about when a contract expires for political purposes. That's what this is really all about today.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate the fact that you've allowed me to speak today. I know you're getting up as though I should be sitting down any second. With that, I will take my seat and say again on behalf of our caucus that I won't be supporting this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: I would just like to remind all members of the House of one of our traditions, that being, if you're making reference to another MPP, you refer to him or her by their riding name or their ministry name.

I will turn to questions and comments.

Mr. Marchese: I remember when the now Minister of Education would attack the Tories in very tough terms. He was not pleasant in his language in his attacks on the Tories. But it appears that everything Liberals do, however, is OK. Nothing the Tories did was OK, but everything the Liberals do is fine. So the Liberals can cut special education by \$100 million, and that's OK. Why? Because Liberals have a heart. The Liberals can cut special transportation funding for 30 school boards, mostly Catholic, and that's OK. Not only that, but Mr. Kennedy, the Minister of Education, calls it equitable.

Another minister, like the Minister of Energy today, approves a contract for the Hydro One CEO of close to one million bucks and he says that's OK. It wasn't OK when the Tories approved a \$1-million contract for Clitheroe at the time, but it's OK for the Liberals to do it because when Liberals do it they know better and presumably they have a heart.

Do you understand what I'm getting at, citizens? What Liberals do is highly political and it needs to be attacked, and attacked strongly, by people like me. We expose the politics of the Minister of Education. When he attacked the Tories for their three-year contracts as being political, I attack Mr. Kennedy, the Minister of Education, for being as political as the Tories. It's not OK. It's equally political and wrong and reprehensible, and that's why I attack him and the Liberal Party for doing what they're doing.

I suppose the Liberals are a little more flexible because they create two-year or four-year contracts, and that by far must be better than three. Why? Because Liberals are introducing it and so, because they have a heart, it must be better.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to those two people from Simcoe North and Trinity-Spadina. Let me tell you, I don't think those people have read this Bill 147. This bill continues to build an atmosphere of peace and stability in our schools. Since our government came to power, we have worked to build a genuine partnership within the education community. We have consulted with the teachers, parents and administrators, and we have listened to the people themselves all over Ontario.

We have in our party some competent people who really have a good background in education, such as Liz Sandals, the member from Guelph-Wellington, former president of the Ontario public school board. We also have Kathleen Wynne from Don Valley West, who is a former school board person.

For the last two years, since we got elected, we have had people going around to every school in Ontario. We have over 4,800 schools in Ontario. Two weeks ago we made a very important announcement. We recognized a need after we met the parents, schoolteachers and school boards, and we announced a \$4-billion project which, immediately this year, will have \$1.1 billion going to all the 72 school boards to repair the schools badly in need of repair that were left behind by the two parties previously in government.

We have a plan, and the people of this House should support Bill 167.

1740

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I listened with interest to the member for Simcoe North and how he discussed this bill and was able to put 20 minutes in, which is remarkable when the bill is only one page.

The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell said that maybe they hadn't read it. I think they could read this because, as I say, it's only one page. There's not much to this bill, as you look at it, and unfortunately it's for political reasons. This is where it's going to be tough for us to support it. The Liberals don't want unrest in 2007 because they've already set that as the date for the election.

I want to mention that the member for Simcoe North said he worked quite well with his boards of education. I've heard that before. I like to think that I try to work with my boards of education too: the Bluewater board and the Catholic board in my riding. We've had some very good meetings. As you know, when we were in government, they didn't particularly like what we did. But I think that education had to be turned around, and that's what we did.

Now, though, we don't want the Liberals messing this up. Unfortunately, with Bill 167, it is a little tough. If they were to adopt Frank Klees's bill as an amendment—it would not be a change for a government in power to take an amendment from the opposition—that would be something nice. If they'd even look at Bill 172—I think it's Mr. Klees's bill—and put that in with this one, maybe we could support it. Wouldn't that be something different, if we supported it with a recorded vote? It would be nice. I'm sure we'll record the vote on this one. At this point, we aren't able to support it. If we could have some amendments, maybe we'd be able to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I was going to be nice and give the Liberals an opportunity to explain why they think this legislation is so necessary. Could it be that 2007 is a very auspicious date for this government? Come on, guys. This is all about you trying to dodge the bullet in an election year. You have a situation where teacher negotiations are going to come up in the year 2007, because right now, legislatively, that's when negotiations with teachers are going to happen. You guys are trying to dodge the bullet and trying to defer teacher negotiations outside the election year.

So I've got to say to myself that it's one of two things. It's really one of two things.

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: It's pretty bad when you've got your own people heckling you.

It's either, number one, that you as a government are trying to dodge the bullet by not having negotiations during an election year. For what reason? That comes to number two, which is, what are you planning on doing when it comes to negotiations? Are you planning on supporting boards and their need to negotiate fair collective

agreements with teachers? That's going to be a question I speak to a little bit later, when I get an opportunity to speak in this debate.

The Acting Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Trinity-Spadina, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Timmins-James Bay for making comments on my 20-minute rotation.

Mr. Speaker, 2007 is becoming a very interesting date around here. I looked last week at the press release from Mr. Cordiano, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, on the Windsor casino expansion announcement, the \$400 million that's been so controversial. Of course, I saw in the press release that it's going to open in 2007. I wonder if the official opening will be before October or after October. My bet is that it will be about August, right? I can see Minister Papatello and Minister Duncan cutting the ribbon around August 2007. You know one thing: It's sure not going to be in November, when the Tories are in power. You know that's not going to happen. Now we've got this bill, Bill 167, that basically does not allow contracts to expire in the year 2007, around election time. That's unfair, and it's for political purposes. It's as simple as that; we've said that before.

As I said earlier, I want to thank you for the opportunity this afternoon. Our caucus will not be supporting this unless you amend it to allow Bill 172, Frank Klees's bill, to proceed ahead. That, of course, would include a three-year contract, and that would allow them to expire in 2007 as well.

So thank you very much for this opportunity. I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Applause.

Mr. Bisson: My cheering section in the Tory caucus is much appreciated.

This is really an interesting debate, because you know what? This is like putting the VCR on rewind and getting to watch a debate that happened in this Legislature, what, about three years ago? Somewhere around there.

I remember very well. Back then, we had a Conservative government, and the Liberals and New Democrats were in opposition. I remember being on the same side with the Liberals. I do remember this. We were on the same side with the Liberals when we debated a bill in this House previously that dealt with the issue of setting how long collective agreements have to be when it comes to negotiation between teachers and their particular school boards.

I remember that at that time—I remember it well—the Liberals were in sync with the then New Democrat opposition in saying we should allow school boards to determine how long their collective agreements should be. If a school board and a teacher's bargaining unit says, "We want a two-year collective agreement," well, that's

up to the bargaining agents. If it's a three- or four- or five-year agreement, it's entirely up to them.

If you take a look out there, when it comes to negotiations across this province, in the private sector and, by and large, in the public sector, most parties are able to come to terms with how long a collective agreement should be. That's one of the final items that's normally left on the table in negotiations, and normally parties are able to come to a pretty good agreement.

How many cases do you know—I just want to ask you this question—where the workers have gone out on strike because of a collective agreement being two or three years? Not too many. Why? Because most workers and most employers can come to an agreement on those issues, based on the circumstances by which they find themselves either within the business or within the collective agreement and the issues that rise out of negotiations.

So by and large, up to now, the province has always taken the view in the private sector that it's entirely up to the bargaining agent, being the union, and the members, along with the employer, to decide how long collective bargaining agreements should be for. We have examples where people have signed agreements that are anywhere from—I've seen them as low as one year; I have seen them as long as 10 years. I don't advocate 10-year agreements; I think that's a little bit too long for somebody to lock themselves into, but I have seen very long ones. For example, I think Abitibi-Price—and my leader might correct me on this, but it seems to me the last negotiations they had were for seven years, if I remember correctly.

My point is, there's all kinds of evidence out there where people go out and bargain collective agreements; where employers and unions, for whatever reason, come to an agreement about how long a collective agreement is supposed to be for.

I remember the Liberals making those arguments while they were in opposition. They stood here—I remember the then leader of the Liberal opposition, Mr. McGuinty—along with the labour critic, I think it was Mr. Agostino at the time, and others—stood up in this House and said the government shouldn't be monkeying around with one of the basic things when it comes to bargaining, and that is determining how long a collective agreement should last, once negotiated. The Liberal opposition at that time railed against the Conservatives for trying to say how long a collective agreement should be in force for, and that government should not impose those kinds of conditions on either the bargaining agent for the teachers or on the employer, the school boards.

Well, something happened. All of a sudden, the Liberals got themselves elected, they're on the other side of the aisle, and now they're flip-flopping again like they've been able to determine—

Mr. Baird: Like fish.

Mr. Bisson: I'm telling you, they're worse than a fish. If a fish was to flop as often as these guys, the fish would beat itself to death, I swear to God. Like you've seen

since this government has been elected, every opportunity they have to either break a promise or flip on the flop, they take it. You say to yourself, "Why are they doing this?"

What's worse, in this one they're legislating it. I say to my friends across the way, and those who are, for whatever reason, in the rump—there's lots of room on the other side, if you guys want to go back there—that basically, quite frankly, you guys are legislating something that you've railed against in opposition. So you've obviously changed your minds.

1750

You have to ask yourself the question, why is the Liberal government and why is Dalton McGuinty and why is Gerard Kennedy, as the Minister of Education, making this move? Could it be that the three-year collective agreement, the length of agreement that has been imposed by the previous government, happens to end in 2007? Could it be that, and that there happens to be another piece of legislation in this House, should it pass, that would fix election dates such that our next provincial election would be October 6 or 7—I forget the date—of the year 2007, and it would just happen to coincide that we would be bargaining with teachers in an election year? And could it be—now, here is what I think is really interesting. I think this tips teachers off to what they can expect in negotiations as a result of this government's actions. If the government is saying they don't want to have collective agreements end in August 2007, and we know that there is an election in October 2007, could it be that they are expecting the teachers to be unhappy about what settlements may be put forward by boards because the government is unprepared to fund school boards to the degree it needs to, and that they are worried that teachers may be upset in an election year?

I think that is exactly what is going on, and I'm just saying the Liberals should be doing what they advocated while they were in opposition. They should be consistent. They should take the position, as we do as New Democrats, that we should allow bargaining agents—the employer, the members of those bargaining units—to decide themselves how long a collective agreement should last.

Ça fait pleinement de bon sens, quand ça vient aux négociations, que les personnes qui sont à la table comprennent très bien les enjeux des négociations et comprennent très bien ce qui est important quand ça vient aux priorités qu'ils mettent à leurs négociations. Une des dernières affaires qu'ils vont négocier, comme le sait très bien M^{me} Meilleur, c'est la date à laquelle la convention collective va finir. C'est d'habitude une des affaires, un point de discussion très difficile pour les agents qui font les négociations. Pourquoi prend-on en Ontario la position que le gouvernement va exiger que les syndicats des enseignants et des enseignantes et les conseils d'éducation aient besoin de finir leurs négociations pour que cela n'arrive pas en 2007? Moi, je pense que c'est un peu ridicule, puis je pense que ça montre que le gouvernement sait très bien qu'il va y avoir des problèmes de négociation avec les profs la prochaine

fois, puis ils ne veulent pas avoir, M^{me} Meilleur, des négociations avec les profs pendant une élection. Mon cher monsieur Lalonde, vous le savez très bien.

J'arrive au deuxième point dans ce projet de loi que je pense est un problème. Si on le regarde, le gouvernement dit qu'ils vont exiger que les conseils scolaires ne donnent pas plus que 2 % dans l'année un et l'année deux d'une convention collective. C'est seulement si les conseils et les syndicats signent une entente de quatre ans qu'ils vont allouer, aux dernières années de la convention collective, jusqu'à 3 %. Mais je dis, écoute, il y a un problème. Je sais que le concept de négociation, pour certains, est un peu difficile à comprendre, mais dans une démocratie, il y a quelque chose qui est bien de base. C'est que les travailleurs ont droit de former un syndicat et de choisir le syndicat qui va les représenter. C'est une forme de démocratie la plus pure. Les travailleurs disent, « Nous, on veut avoir un syndicat en vue de négocier avec notre employeur. » Il y a des fois que les employeurs vont faire des exigences dans les négociations qui sont très difficiles pour les employés, et parfois les employés ont besoin d'accepter certaines conditions parce qu'ils pensent qu'ils n'ont pas trop de choix, et ils les acceptent.

Mais la même chose est vraie pour les employeurs. Il y a des fois en négociations que l'employeur n'aime pas les demandes. Ce qui arrive dans ces cas, avec cette législation, c'est que les syndicats des professeurs arrivent, puis ils disent, « On veut avoir 2,5 % » ou « On veut avoir 3 % chaque année dans une convention collective de deux ans. » La législation dit que, si tu le fais, le ministre de l'Éducation va pénaliser les commissions scolaires pour l'avoir fait. C'est à dire aux commissions scolaires, « Allez négocier vos conventions collectives, puis attachez vos mains en arrière de votre dos, parce que je vous dis, si vous rentrez faire les négociations puis vous donnez plus que 2 % dans l'année un et l'année deux d'une convention collective, nous autres, la province, allons vous pénaliser. »

Mais ce que les conseils vont faire—they sont vraiment poignés. Ce qui arrive—je ne dis pas que ça va arriver, mais ce qui arrive, c'est que mon ami Paul Taillefer de l'AEFO arrive avec son syndicat pour négocier avec les conseils, ou un autre syndicat comme le OSSTF, et ils disent, « On veut avoir 2,5 %, on veut avoir 3 %. » Ça met le conseil scolaire dans une situation très difficile parce qu'ils savent que, « Même si on peut le payer et on le leur donne, le gouvernement va nous pénaliser puis nous ôter de l'argent d'une autre partie de notre budget quand ça vient au développement des professeurs, » ou on va pénaliser le conseil scolaire dans d'autres exigences.

Je vous dis, mes deux amis de l'autre bord, que si vous étiez en opposition et les Conservateurs ou le NPD avaient proposé un tel projet de loi, vous seriez ici, sur ce bord de la Chambre, en train de vous opposer à ce que vous voyez comme un morceau de législation qui est négatif.

I say to my friends across the way that you can't have it both ways. It's a really dangerous thing. What you're

doing in this legislation is not only trying to duck out of the year 2007; the other issue is that you're saying to school boards, "You're only allowed to settle a collective agreement, if it's two years, for 2% and 2% wage increases." The government is saying, by way of this legislation, "If you settle at 2.5% and 2.5%, we're going to penalize the school board." How does the school board negotiate a fair collective agreement with their teachers if they're handcuffed, with their hands behind their backs, and told, "If you go above 2% and 2%, we're going to penalize you by taking away money for teacher development or we're going to penalize you," I would say, by other regressive parts of this bill that deal with how you are going to deal with school boards. I don't think that's a good idea.

There is a principle in democracy, and that principle is people have the right to choose if they want to belong to a union. With that right, once they are lucky enough to be certified, they have the right to negotiate with their employer what they think the conditions of work are that they should be working for.

Bargaining is never easy. Speaker, you know. You've lived in this province, as have all of us. Anywhere that you have bargaining, there has to be some give and take. At times, the employer will ask for concessions from

employees; at times, employees will ask for benefits from their employer. Negotiations will bring them somewhere in between everybody's position to make an agreement. But if the government gets in the middle and says, "I'm going to limit what you can negotiate," I think it's a really bad principle to go on.

I'm going to have an opportunity to finish this speech the next day this comes by, because I realize it's almost 6 of the clock, but I want the government to reflect on what they're doing. You railed against this while in opposition. You should be railing against it in government. You should never have proposed it. This is all about your trying to duck and be out of teacher negotiations come the next round of negotiations, which will be expected in 2007, the year of the election. At the same time, you're handcuffing the ability of the boards to negotiate fair collective agreements with their employees.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask for adjournment of the debate. We'll pick up this debate the next time it's called up on the order paper.

The Acting Speaker: You don't have to ask, because it's 6 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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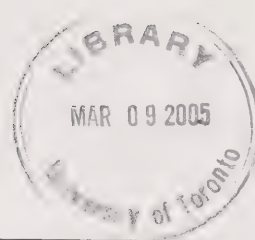
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Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} mars 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CITY OF OTTAWA AMENDMENT ACT, 2005 LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA VILLE D'OTTAWA

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 22, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): I'd indicate that I'm sharing my time with the hard-working member for Lanark—Carleton.

Je veux dire au début que je suis très impressionné par l'effort du français du ministre de l'Énergie et du chef parlementaire du gouvernement.

Je veux dire aussi que je ne suis pas impressionné par ce projet de loi qui est devant nous. C'est bien sûr une promesse brisée par le gouvernement McGuinty. Je veux dire très clairement à tous et à toutes qui sont présents que Dalton McGuinty et le Parti libéral ont brisé leur promesse électorale. Dalton McGuinty a fait deux promesses avant et pendant la campagne électorale.

Premièrement, il a fait une promesse de déclarer la nouvelle grande ville d'Ottawa officiellement bilingue. Dans ce projet de loi, qui est moins d'une page, cela n'y est pas contenu. Il y a beaucoup de francophones dans la nouvelle grande ville d'Ottawa qui ont travaillé très fort pour avoir un projet de loi qui affirme cette réalité. Le premier ministre, quand il était de ce côté de la Chambre, était très fâché avec l'ancien gouvernement parce que ce n'était pas contenu dans le projet de loi qui a créé la nouvelle grande ville d'Ottawa, mais ce n'est pas dans son projet de loi non plus. C'est très clair. On a lu ce projet de loi. Le mot « bilinguisme » n'est pas contenu dans le projet de loi. Ce n'est pas ce qu'il a dit pendant la campagne électorale et dans cette place quand on a parlé de la nouvelle grande ville d'Ottawa.

La deuxième promesse que Dalton McGuinty a faite comme chef de l'opposition et chef du Parti libéral pendant la campagne électorale était très claire : c'était de prendre le « bylaw » de la ville d'Ottawa et mettre en

place dans les statuts de l'Ontario d'avoir un statut bilingue. Ce n'est pas contenu dans ce projet de loi.

Je veux dire au début de ce débat que j'étais très content, et j'aime dans le domaine personnel ma chère collègue la ministre des Affaires francophones, mais ce n'est pas ce que vous avez dit dans votre circonscription pendant la campagne électorale comme conseil municipal. Ce n'est pas quelque chose dont vous avez parlé pendant la campagne électorale, pendant le débat à l'hôtel de ville. Ce n'est pas la demande que le conseil de la ville d'Ottawa a faite à l'ancien gouvernement. Ce n'est pas ce que vous avez promis pendant la campagne électorale.

J'ai regardé aussi mon cher collègue le député de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell : c'est une promesse brisée. Si vous connaissez un seul chef de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario—un seul chef reconnu par n'importe qui—si vous connaissez quelqu'un qui dit qu'en réalité votre promesse est en place, je vais dire que je fais une faute. Mais je connais très bien que c'est une promesse brisée du plus haut—whatever.

1850

I should say, and put on the record very clearly, that it's a promise that I'm glad they broke. I'm glad they didn't keep their promise; I'm glad they broke it. I think it's a good thing that they didn't keep their promise. The Liberal leader at the time, Dalton McGuinty, and his Liberal team—save one member, the member for Ottawa West—Nepean—were very critical of the previous provincial government on this issue. From the very day that bill saw the light of day, they were very critical that there wasn't a declaration of the bilingual character of the city of Ottawa. They were very critical of that. The Liberal Party sought to divide people in Ottawa and people in Canada on the basis of language.

I say to the member for Ottawa—Orléans that he should get back to his riding and try to fight for the Hydro One assets that were waiting to be transferred, because if that hasn't happened by election day, that will be a big issue.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): We're going to do it.

Mr. Baird: Well, I've waited 18 months, and I've seen nothing.

Mr. McNeely: You had five years—

Mr. Baird: I promised not to do it. I was honest; I never lied to my constituents. I never lied to my constituents. So I say to the member for Ottawa—Orléans—

The Acting Speaker: Will the member for Nepean–Carleton please withdraw that unparliamentary reference?

Mr. Baird: I haven't accused any member of lying in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member please withdraw that unparliamentary reference?

Mr. Baird: I withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Baird: As an MPP, I think it's important to be honest. I don't lie to my constituents. I do not lie to my constituents. I look forward to the next election campaign, and if they're not there, paying the lower price, there will be big trouble, I say to the member for Ottawa–Orléans, because they will be—he shakes his finger, puts it up and says, “Yes.”

Mr. McNeely: We'll do it.

Mr. Baird: “We'll do it.” Baloney. You've had 18 months, and you've done nothing. People say, “What the heck happened to Phil McNeely? We haven't seen hide nor hair of him. We haven't seen him at all.” They'll be looking at that, I tell the member, and he'll be called upon—

The Acting Speaker: I would like to remind all members of the House that we have a tradition here to refer to other members by riding name or by ministry, not by their personal name or their surname.

Mr. Baird: I say to the member opposite that he will not be able to look the francophones in the city of Ottawa in the eye and say he has kept his promise. I challenge the member to stand up in the two-minute questions and comments and name me a single francophone in your riding who says that this is 100% keeping your promise. I challenge the member to name a single francophone in his constituency—anywhere in the city of Ottawa—who says this isn't a broken promise and a betrayal of Dalton McGuinty's election campaign promise. A single name; you've got 120,000 constituents. I challenge him, and I challenge the minister of francophone affairs and the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Le président de l'ACFO, l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario, sera assez fâché. C'est l'ancien député libéral de cette place, Jean Poirier. Il est bien connu que ce n'est pas une promesse qui a été mise en place; c'est une promesse brisée.

I challenge any of the members to name a single francophone in Ottawa who says this is 100% keeping Dalton McGuinty's campaign promise. They won't be able to find anyone.

This issue was exploited by Dalton McGuinty like no issue has been. This was a divisive issue for Canadian unity, a divisive issue for linguistic unity in Ottawa. Sheila Copps, the then minister of Heritage Canada, was phoning me and saying, “You've got to declare it officially bilingual,” when I was the minister of francophone affairs, that this would be doing irreparable harm to Canadian unity; or Jean Charest, the then leader of the opposition, now the Premier of Quebec, phoning me and saying it had to be done for the sake of Canadian unity,

that it would just be playing into the hands of the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Who said this?

Mr. Baird: Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec, the then leader of the opposition.

Sheila Copps; Stéphane Dion, whose leader, Jean Chrétien, destroyed the attempt at constitutional reconciliation, criticizing me about national unity. And to see this government come back here—they should be apologizing to the federalists in Quebec for the damage they did to national unity by all the stories on this issue that were on the network newscasts. They should apologize to this House, and they should apologize to every francophone in Ontario.

Francophones may not always have liked where John Baird stood; they may not always have liked where Mike Harris stood. But they could respect it, and they knew that when they made a promise, they would keep the promise. They knew, when an issue came up, that they would get the straight goods, and they don't have that from this Liberal government.

I'd be interested to hear the speech on this issue from my colleague, the member of the third party, because I disagree with the member for the third party—

Mr. Bisson: I disagree with you.

Mr. Baird: —and he disagrees with me, but I respect him, because he's going to honour his campaign commitment. He's going to do what he said he would do before the election.

The members sit across there, smug, with smiles on their faces. This was a terrible black eye to Canadian federalism and on the unity of the linguistic duality of the city of Ottawa. They should be ashamed of themselves—no comment whatsoever to say that they weren't straightforward, that they weren't honest with the electorate.

I say to the member for Lanark–Carleton, would you like the full 20 minutes after this? Would you like me to go for the full 20?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): You go ahead.

Mr. Baird: I'm not going to split my time, Speaker. The member for Lanark will be speaking in the next go-round.

I'm hearing from francophones in my riding. Here's a letter written by the school board in my riding, le Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est. C'est une lettre qui est écrite à vous, madame la Ministre, au sujet des coupures budgétaires de TFO.

La chef de ce conseil, Marie Biron, demande à vous, « Dans votre double rôle de ministre de la Culture et ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, nous sollicitons votre appui pour contrer toute tentative visant à amputer TFO des ressources dont elle a besoin pour accomplir sa mission. »

J'aime personnellement, j'ai beaucoup d'égard pour, madame la Ministre, mais je veux demander, est-ce que vous appuyez ces coupures ou êtes-vous contre? Est-ce que vous appuyez la communauté francophone? Votre

chère collègue la ministre responsable de TVO/TFO est ici. Vous pouvez peut-être parler avec elle ce soir sur cette initiative très importante. Elle n'est pas consciente des besoins de la francophonie. J'ai entendu que l'émission Panorama va être coupée à cause de cette décision du gouvernement libéral. Je suis bien content et je suis bien sûr que si Dalton McGuinty était sur ce côté de la Chambre et un gouvernement conservateur avait fait ça, il serait fâché. Il a parlé contre ces coupures budgétaires. Ce n'est pas quelque chose dont vous avez parlé pendant la campagne électorale et c'est très important.

J'ai ici la lettre de Marie Biron du Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est, et je demande au gouvernement pourquoi on n'a pas fait un débat sur cette politique qui est très importante pour la communauté francophone. Pourquoi n'a-t-on pas eu un débat sur ces coupures budgétaires à Panorama et à TFO ? On attendait l'ancienne députée d'Ottawa-Vanier, M^{me} Boyer, pour qu'elle fasse un projet de loi pour avoir un conseil d'administration pour TFO. C'est pareil.

Interjection.

M. Baird: Un conseil autonome pour TFO. Je l'apprécie, madame la Ministre. Est-ce qu'on a vu ce conseil ? Non, on a vu les coupures budgétaires de ce gouvernement.

1900

J'ai ici la lettre de Marie Biron. J'ai aussi une politique du conseil des écoles publiques anglaises de l'Ontario. L'école DesLauriers, dans la circonscription d'Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean, a besoin de beaucoup d'appui. Ce n'est pas en bon état physique. Il y a de bons profs et de bons enfants, de bons étudiants, de bons directeurs ou directrices, mais l'édifice a besoin de beaucoup de travail. Est-ce qu'on fait un débat sur ce problème dans la région du grand Ottawa ? Non, on fait un débat sur un projet de loi qui est moins d'une page. Je demande pourquoi on n'a pas eu un débat sur ça.

On n'a pas assez d'argent pour avoir une nouvelle école pour ces étudiants dans la circonscription d'Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean. Les étudiants de mon comté peuvent aller à cette école DesLauriers, cette école de la septième année à la douzième année. Les enfants chez moi ont besoin d'une meilleure école, mais est-ce qu'on avait une initiative sur ça ? Mais non. C'est quelque chose qui est très important.

Why are we debating this meaningless, one-page bill? Why aren't we debating long-term care? That's what I want to know. That is an initiative that is really big in our constituencies. I had occasion to attend Granite Ridge in Stittsville. The member for Lanark-Carleton is here tonight. He knows Granite Ridge in Stittsville; it's a brand new, 200-plus, long-term-care facility. He and I fought very hard. He fought hard to get the commitment to build it and I fought hard to get it completed when he was the member and then when I became the member. Granite Ridge is talking about the effects of the devastating cuts to schedule 5 physiotherapy being made by Dalton McGuinty and George—sorry, le premier ministre et le ministre de la Santé du gouvernement libéral. J'ai visité

cette maison vendredi, and I saw the seniors who so desperately need this physiotherapy coverage. Some of them get it two or three times a week. The McGuinty government is cutting it—not by 10%, not by 20%, not by 50%, but by 100%. That money is not being re-invested into health care. That money is going into the black hole of the consolidated revenue fund. It's not that they are cutting it there to hire a new nurse in a hospital; they're cutting it and it's going into the black hole that is the consolidated revenue fund. This will have devastating effects. I met with the administrator of Granite Ridge, Linda Chaplin.

The member for Lanark-Carleton will know that he and I have talked many times about the Garden Terrace facility in Kanata that he worked so hard to get built. I also talked to Karl Samuelson, the administrator. They wondered, are we debating this at Queen's Park? I said no, we're debating this meaningless, less than one-page bill on bilingualism in Ottawa-Carleton, a bill that does not even contain bilingualism.

I met these two administrators and saw first-hand the work that is being done with physiotherapy and the devastating consequences that are going to happen to one patient I met who had had a stroke, who needs her legs to be mobile so she can have a quality of life. I talked to one gentleman who spoke to me about how when his wife takes the physiotherapy, she comes back and it's like she's alive again. If she loses that, within a matter of months she'll be bedridden and won't have that same quality of life.

Well, that is something that is tremendously important. People may have said that while we built 20,000 new long-term-care beds when none had been built in the 10 years before us under the Peterson and Rae governments, no net new places, that we didn't do enough on the operating side. But they're going backwards, not forward. I say to the member for Lanark-Carleton, do you remember them talking during the campaign about cutting physiotherapy for seniors who have had strokes or who are suffering from dementia? Do you remember that?

Mr. Sterling: Of course not.

Mr. Baird: Of course not, he says. I say to the member for Bruce-Gray-Owen Sound, do you remember them talking about cutting physiotherapy services?

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Gray-Owen Sound): They never mentioned it.

Mr. Baird: Never mentioned it. I have petitions here from literally thousands of people in my riding on this issue, and they say, "Why aren't you debating that at Queen's Park?" Because we're debating this bill that's less than a page long.

I say to the government that they have broken both their promises, they have chickened out and backed down on bilingualism, they've adopted something that is no better than the previous Conservative government. I'm glad they broke their promise. I think this bill is silly; I think it's ridiculous.

The city of Ottawa is always going to have a bilingualism policy. There is no one of any prominence in the city who says they don't support providing good-quality French-language services where it would make sense to do so. I don't know a single councillor who has said they shouldn't provide good-quality French-language services where it makes sense to do so.

Under this meaningless bill, the city of Ottawa could bring in a bylaw and say, "We're only going to offer French-language services in North Gore between 3 a.m. and 4 a.m." That would be allowed under this bill. That's how hollow and meaningless it is.

Is there any shame over there? I have respect for the minister, but on this issue I have a tiny bit of respect for her because at least she wouldn't put her name on the front of this bill. She was so embarrassed by the measly content of the bill that she forced her colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to put his name on the bill. She was too embarrassed to put her name on the bill. I say to the members opposite that they really should bow their heads in shame. When they look at the next election and choices, they may, on a few issues, disagree with this government. They agreed with us when we brought in funding for education for every French student in the province to get fair treatment. They agreed with us on that. They agreed with us when we started 12 independent French-language school boards. They will look at this record and think it's rather paltry.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

M. Bisson: Je veux dire à mon collègue M. Baird—de Nepean—Carleton; excuse-moi, monsieur le Président—que je suis d'accord avec lui sur un point. Ce point est simplement ceci : au moins quand les conservateurs ont été au pouvoir et la cité d'Ottawa leur a demandé de passer un projet de loi pour s'assurer qu'on enchâsse dans la loi provinciale le bilinguisme officiel pour la ville d'Ottawa, le gouvernement conservateur de la journée a dit non. Je n'étais pas d'accord. J'ai pensé qu'ils auraient dû le faire. Mais au moins les conservateurs ont été très clairs. Ils ont dit, « Non, on ne veut pas le faire. »

Les libéraux, en opposition—moi, j'étais là—ont dit, « Oui, nous autres sommes en faveur, comme le NPD. » Moi, comme critique des Affaires francophones pour le parti néo-démocrate, j'ai pris la position—en discussion avec mon caucus et faisant affaire avec la politique de notre parti—que si n'importe quelle municipalité demande à la province l'habilité d'enchâsser un projet de loi tel que ça pour le bilinguisme officiel, la province doit le faire. Le gouvernement conservateur a dit non. Mais les libéraux, eux autres, ont dit oui.

Je n'ai pas mes lunettes avec moi. Ça va mal pour être capable de lire un document. Mais si on regarde dans ce projet de loi à la section 2, « La cité établit la portée et le contenu de la politique adoptée en application du paragraphe (1) », ça veut dire que oui, on confère dans ce projet de loi une politique de bilinguisme officiel dans la ville d'Ottawa. Mais dans le projet de loi, on dit que si la cité d'Ottawa décide de changer sa politique, elle a le droit de le faire. Ça veut dire que la politique elle-même

qui est établie ici, quand j'ai poigné le site Web de la ville d'Ottawa—s'ils décident de mettre vide la politique, à zéro, ils ont le droit de le faire.

Les libéraux ont dit une affaire avant les élections et ils ont fait complètement la différente affaire une fois arrivés au pouvoir. Je suis d'accord avec le député de Nepean—Carleton. Le gouvernement libéral, franchement, n'a pas fait ce qu'ils ont dit qu'ils étaient pour faire dans la dernière élection, puis ils ont été contre leur mot à la communauté francophone.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Monsieur le Président, j'étais vraiment à l'écoute de mon ami de Nepean—Carleton.

Je me rappelle lorsque le gouvernement avait demandé à M. Shortliffe, le commissaire, de regarder à la fusion de la ville d'Ottawa, les 11 municipalités. Dans le rapport de M. Shortliffe, il avait hautement recommandé qu'on puisse enchâsser dans la loi le bilinguisme de la ville d'Ottawa. Nous savons très bien que l'ancien gouvernement conservateur a refusé de s'assurer à ce que le bilinguisme fasse partie de cette restructuration. Notre gouvernement McGuinty démontre vraiment que nous sommes à l'écoute de la communauté francophone de la ville d'Ottawa.

Nous savons que dans la ville d'Ottawa ils ont passé un arrêté conseil—on pourrait dire « bylaw » en anglais—en mai 2004, demandant à ce que la ville soit reconnue comme une ville bilingue, afin de pouvoir donner les services aux francophones dans les endroits où il y avait une demande. On n'a jamais dit qu'on demanderait aux opérateurs de charrue, par exemple, qu'ils devaient être bilingues. C'est absolument faux. Lorsqu'on se promène sur la rue et qu'on dit qu'il va falloir que maintenant l'opérateur de la charrue puisse parler les deux langues, le français et l'anglais, c'est complètement faux.

On se rappelle que, actuellement, avec les consultations, tout démontre que les lois mises en place par la ville d'Ottawa seraient satisfaisantes pour la communauté francophone d'Ottawa. Donc c'est cela exactement que nous faisons. La ville d'Ottawa adopte une politique traitant de l'utilisation du français et de l'anglais dans la totalité ou dans certaines parties de son administration, et dans la fourniture de la totalité ou de certains de ses services municipaux. Donc, ceci est clair.

1910

Mr. Murdoch: Here we are again, late at night, debating a one-page bill. What did we do this afternoon? We debated another one-page bill, and before that we talked about pit bulls. You would think this Liberal government would want to get down to something that's important.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Like beer and wine in corner stores.

Mr. Murdoch: Maybe beer and wine in corner stores.

What is going on over there with the Liberals? We're having trouble with long-term care, our health care, we've got farmers coming here tomorrow upset with

what's going on in the farming community, and we're here tonight debating a bilingual bill that's one page.

I'm sure it must be important to somebody, but there are a lot of people in this province who are suffering, and we're not here debating the things that are important to the majority of people in Ontario. As I said, tomorrow we're having a big rally outside, with thousands of farmers coming here, saying, "Hey, we can't make a living at this. You've got to help us out." And we're sitting in here today, again, debating a one-pager—something about bilingualism in Ottawa—and there are all these other serious things that are a problem.

This afternoon we debated a one-pager again, and that was a political one, so we wouldn't have any strikes around 2007 because there might be an election then. Before that, we talked about pit bulls. Come on now; somebody has to get serious in the Liberal government. The Minister of the Environment is here. Maybe she would like to get something on here to talk about because we have environment problems in our country, and here we are again, late at night again, debating one-pagers.

It shows me that there is no plan with this Liberal government. You got elected a year and a half ago, and you haven't figured out yet that you're the government. Hopefully, somewhere along the line you do, so you can give us a plan of what you want to do.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): C'est malheureux qu'on ait à entendre aujourd'hui, en 2005, des débats de la sorte : que les francophones—ce n'est pas important qu'à Ottawa que l'on offre des services dans les deux langues. Et je pense que mon collègue de Nepean-Carleton—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the members of the opposition to allow the minister to make her points.

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Mon collègue de Nepean-Carleton sait très bien que le projet de loi qui est présenté n'est pas un projet de loi des Affaires francophones; c'est un projet de loi qui relève du ministère des Affaires municipales. C'est pour cela que c'est de la part du ministre des Affaires municipales, parce que c'est un amendement à la loi créant la ville d'Ottawa.

L'amendement répond très bien aux demandes du conseil municipal parce qu'on demande ici « que la cité d'Ottawa adopte une politique traitant de l'utilisation du français et de l'anglais. » Alors, on n'a pas besoin de parler de bilinguisme parce que, si on dit « en anglais et en français dans la totalité ou certaines parties de son administration et dans la fourniture de la totalité ou de certains de ses services municipaux, » on demande que la ville continue à offrir ces services-là suivant la politique sur le bilinguisme adoptée en 2003, suite à la fusion des 12 municipalités de la région. C'était une recommandation du commissaire, qui avait été nommé par le gouvernement précédent, que la ville soit déclarée bilingue. C'est ce que notre gouvernement fait aujourd'hui.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I return to the member for Nepean-Carleton for two minutes in way of reply.

Mr. Baird: The challenge I gave out was for any Liberal member to name one single francophone anywhere in Ottawa who supported this bill, who thought it kept your campaign promise. Despite 105,000 francophones in Ottawa, you people can't name a single one who doesn't believe that this bill—not the members—isn't a bald-faced lie to the election commitment that Dalton McGuinty made. That is the reality, and for the minister to get up and say that we're still debating whether there should be French-language services is an insult to the people of Ottawa. It's an insult to the people of my riding of Nepean-Carleton. It's an insult to urban, suburban and rural voters where there is a 99.9% recognition that we should provide good-quality French-language services where numbers promote. You say that Glen Shortliffe should have recommended we declare Ottawa bilingual? You haven't followed it.

I like the member for Ottawa-Vanier, I like the minister of francophone affairs, but she has lost all credibility on linguistic issues. When you compare the McGuinty government's record on French-language services, it is pathetic. You're cutting TFO; you've broken this campaign commitment. I can't think of a single difference the average francophone family anywhere in Ontario would notice since the change in government with respect to the offering of French-language services.

Furthermore, the Liberal Party divided this country, divided this province, divided this city on linguistic lines for cheap, cheap, cheap political points, and they all ought to be ashamed of themselves and bow their heads.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to do the lead; my colleague from Timmins-James Bay will. But I did want to just have a moment to say a few things about the bill. So I'd like to defer the lead, and he will do that. Do we need unanimous consent?

The Acting Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt, you need to seek unanimous consent to defer the lead. Would you like to seek unanimous consent?

Ms. Martel: I'd ask for unanimous consent to defer the lead.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Ms. Martel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and all the members who are here. I won't speak that long, but let me make a couple of points because my community as well was a community that went through a forced amalgamation under the previous government. We didn't have the same request coming forward from our city council to the previous government that came to the previous government from the city of Ottawa, but I do want to deal with this because we have a significant francophone population in our city. I'm very conscious of that population in Ottawa and their desires and aspirations, and the fact that the city itself, through its council,

which is an elected representative body, has made it very clear that they want the city to be bilingual.

Let's deal with a little bit of history, because my take on this is, frankly, that there isn't any difference between what didn't happen under the Tories and what's not going to happen under the Liberals. I don't see any difference, except the member for Nepean—Carleton is correct when he says his government said no. They were very clear about saying to the city of Ottawa during the amalgamation process that no, they were not going to pass a provincial statute or amend the amalgamation statute that was coming forward to declare the city of Ottawa officially bilingual. They were not going to do that in a provincial statute. People were clear about that.

I disagreed with that because I felt that if the city and council came forward during the amalgamation process, representing the wishes of the people, as they do because they are elected, and made that request, then during the amalgamation process and with the bill that forced the amalgamation, that should have been part of the bill, to respect the wishes of the council which legitimately represents the people in the new city of Ottawa.

1920

This government, however, is not going to do anything different, because you are not going to, in a provincial statute, also declare that the city is officially bilingual. You're not going to do that. I find it a little reprehensible that you would try to portray this bill as doing that, because that is not the effect of the bill at all; I don't think it was ever the intent of the bill. I think what is happening here is that you are using a bill that you hope most people won't clearly understand doesn't deliver to them what you specifically promised to deliver to them before the last election and during the last election.

So a little bit of history: Under the previous government, four different communities dealt with amalgamation. Mine was one, Hamilton was another, Chatham-Kent was the third and Ottawa was the fourth. Under that process, as the different boroughs and communities in Ottawa were amalgamated through provincial legislation, the council of the day came to the province and said they wanted the city to be declared officially bilingual in the new provincial statute that was establishing the new city. If I'm wrong, the member from Carleton is going to correct me when he gets up. This is my understanding of the history of this.

The government of the day said no. We disagreed with that, but they did. They were up front with the people of Ottawa and the council that they were not going to do that. OK?

Then during the last election—I think I have a quote from Mr. McGuinty at the time. I do. Hang on. At the time that that happened, when Mike Harris refused to do this, Dalton McGuinty demanded that the Premier “stand up for the rights of francophones in Ottawa by amending the legislation to establish that the new amalgamated city of Ottawa be bilingual.” Here's what Premier McGuinty said—he wasn't Premier at the time; he was the leader of the official opposition at the time. When Mike Harris

said that he would not, by way of provincial statute, declare the city of Ottawa officially bilingual, Dalton McGuinty demanded that the Premier, Mike Harris, “stand up for the rights of francophones in Ontario” and amend the legislation that was being dealt with at that time in 1999 to require that the new city of Ottawa be bilingual. That's what Mr. McGuinty said at the time.

Then, before the election and during the last election, Mr. McGuinty said very clearly that, if elected, a Liberal government would pass a provincial statute that would clearly declare the city of Ottawa as officially bilingual. That's what his promise was before the election and during the election.

Are we dealing with a bill that purports to have a provincial statute declare the city of Ottawa officially bilingual? Is that what we're dealing with in this bill? The answer is: absolutely not, categorically not, no way; this is not happening.

What we have is a statute that says that essentially the bilingualism policy of the city, which the city has already adopted by a city bylaw, will remain in place. There is a very significant, very important distinction to be made. You are not passing a provincial statute that clearly says, “We, the province, say that the city of Ottawa is officially bilingual”; on the contrary, all you are doing is saying that the city of Ottawa can continue to have the bilingualism policy that it has had in place for some time now.

But the problem becomes—and this is what the council in 1999 was trying to deal with when it came to the province in the first place to ask you to amend the provincial legislation on amalgamation. The concern is that a future council can make changes to the bylaw. Indeed, a future council could make a determination that the city would not have a bilingual policy at all, could vote on that and it could be extinguished. The rights that francophones in the new city of Ottawa have come to enjoy and to expect could be extinguished as easily as that, by a new council either amending the bylaw on bilingualism or getting rid of it altogether.

That's why the council came to the province during the amalgamation debate and said, “Do it as a provincial statute so then it will always be in effect, it will always be in force and the very significant francophone population in Ottawa will always enjoy the ability, the right and the opportunity to receive services in their official language.”

What you are doing is completely contrary to what you promised. It is in fact yet another broken promise. The city again in 2004 reaffirmed the bilingualism policy, so it's very clear what their wishes are. But this bill tonight does not respect the request that had been made to a previous government and does not respect, most importantly, the promise that your leader made during the election campaign to the people who live in Ottawa. That promise was very clear: that a provincial statute would declare clearly, categorically and for all time that the city of Ottawa was officially bilingual, and that as a result of doing that, no city council could then or in the future

make changes at council to the existing bylaw to diminish or extinguish the provision of French-language services to its citizens.

I just want to make the point in the legislation that points that out very clearly, that the responsibility here is not a provincial one, by the province making a clear and categorical statement that the city will be bilingual and having that in provincial statute—no. All the current law that we're debating here tonight does is essentially say that the city can maintain its bylaw, and, here in subsection 11.1(2): "The scope and content of the policy adopted under subsection (1) shall be as determined by the city"; that is, the provisions of the bylaw itself.

So any future council can come forward and change the current bilingual policy, and that's the end of the debate. That's the end of the rights that people who lived in Ottawa, especially francophones, thought that they were going to get from you when your leader, during the election and before the election, stood up and promised people that he would bring in a provincial statute to make the city officially bilingual.

This bill that we are dealing with here tonight makes it absolutely clear that it's the city itself that can change any and all provisions with respect to the provision of French-language services to the citizens of Ottawa—any and all. Amend, extinguish, take away—add to, maybe—the fear was, by previous councils and the current one, extinguish. That can be done, and you're letting that happen with the bill that we are debating here tonight.

Let me just conclude by saying that your leader was oh, so fierce on this issue when we were dealing with the amalgamation of the city of Ottawa under a previous Conservative government. When the city came forward and asked to be declared officially bilingual under the bill that was creating the newly amalgamated city, Mr. Harris said no. And Mr. McGuinty said, "Stand up for the rights of francophones in Ontario. Amend the legislation to allow that the new amalgamated city of Ottawa be bilingual."

That's what he promised. And we are here tonight dealing with a bill that does nothing like that at all. We are essentially in the same position tonight, and we will be after this bill passes, as the city of Ottawa found itself in when it came to the former government and asked them for a provincial statute. They refused to do it. At least they were up front and told the city that. You are not doing it with this statute.

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The most regrettable thing about this debate is that, during the course of the debate—because I was here when this debate started—I heard any number of Liberals try to say, "We are doing what the city asked and we are maintaining our election promise." Frankly, folks, you're doing nothing of the sort.

The people who are going to suffer are the people in the city of Ottawa if any future council comes forward and decides to try to diminish or lessen or amend or even extinguish rights that francophones currently enjoy with respect to city services now.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Baird: The shame game never ends. Not a single Liberal MPP can stand up and name—I'm going to expand my challenge, I say to the member for Nickel Belt. Name me a francophone anywhere in the world who thinks you kept your promise with this bill. Name me a francophone anywhere in the world who would stand up and say—

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: —and who's not a member of the Liberal caucus and you're not a francophone, I say to the chief government whip—this promise is broken. It is worthless.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): That's not true. I'm a francophone.

Mr. Baird: Are you a francophone? I'm sorry; I didn't know that.

I've never heard him speak French.

Mr. Levac: I'm hiding in the weeds.

Mr. Baird: You should be proud to be a francophone.

All I can say is that not one of them can stand up and name me a single francophone anywhere in Ottawa—so I expanded it to anywhere in Ontario. I'm now expanding it to—the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is laughing, because you're not going to name one anywhere in the world who wouldn't say that this bill makes a lie of the campaign promise. They can't name a single one.

I say to the member for Nickel Belt, I may disagree on with her on this issue but at least she's honest. At least the member for Nickel Belt doesn't lie. You can agree or disagree with her, but she's honest, she tells the truth, and I respect that about the member for Nickel Belt.

So I repeat my challenge. I say to the members opposite, name me a single francophone anywhere in the world who says that this is keeping your promise.

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: Name me a single francophone. We know the minister's too embarrassed to put her name on the front of this bill. Every francophone in Ontario knows that I was honest and I didn't lie to them.

Mr. Bisson: People who watch this debate on television or read it in Hansard should have the benefit of sitting here in the House and listening to the heckles, because I thought it was absolutely hilarious. My friend Mr. Baird was saying, "Name me one francophone in Ottawa who is prepared to say this is a good thing," and I hear my friend Mr. Lalonde across the way from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell saying, "They're going to be in Ottawa, dancing on the streets, enjoying it tomorrow in the city of Ottawa." My God, it's going to be a small street party. Oh, Lord. Elle va être petite, cette affaire-là.

Je suis d'accord avec tous les commentaires que ma collègue M^{me} Martel a faits. Justement, je vais avoir l'opportunité dans ce débat de faire le discours d'une heure pour le Nouveau Parti démocratique. Je veux dire au gouvernement que je ne vais pas prendre mon heure, je vais prendre un petit peu de temps, parce que demain je vais proposer un amendement qui fera de ce projet de

loi ce que la loi est supposée de faire, et c'est de conférer à la ville d'Ottawa un statut qui dit, « Vous êtes officiellement bilingue. »

M^{me} Martel, la députée de Nickel Belt, a clairement dit dans ce débat ce qui est arrivé. Quand la ville a été fusionnée, les conservateurs ont refusé de conférer ce droit à la ville d'Ottawa. La ville d'Ottawa a demandé aux partis d'opposition, comme au gouvernement, de le conférer à eux. Les libéraux, comme les néo-démocrates, ont dit, « Si on forme le gouvernement, on va le faire. » Les libéraux arrivent ici avec un projet de loi, qui est ici, et on dit dans ce projet de loi qu'on va conférer la politique du bilinguisme à la ville d'Ottawa, mais si la ville veut changer de politique, elle a le droit.

M. Lalonde: Trouve-moi cette place. Ce n'est pas dedans du tout.

M. Bisson: Regarde, tu vas avoir une chance de faire des cocoricos au comité.

Je veux seulement dire que je vais avoir mon opportunité plus tard de parler un peu plus. Félicitations à la députée M^{me} Martel.

Mr. McNeely: I sat on city council when this bylaw that's presently in place for bilingualism in the city of Ottawa was brought forward. It was very divisive, and my community was split as well. I think that once the bylaw got in place, it was very well accepted. It's going very well in Ottawa.

When this election came up, we did exactly what we promised. We promised before, and we made sure that it was down in writing so we would know it. This divisive attitude from that side is not assisting this debate. We did exactly what we said we would do: Ottawa is a bilingual city.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I don't need any help. I would ask the member for Nepean—Carleton to refrain from heckling the member for Ottawa—Orléans. The member for Ottawa—Orléans has the floor.

Mr. McNeely: We did exactly what we said. We went through this policy very carefully with Premier McGuinty. I told people exactly what we were going to do; we've done exactly what we said. This is working in Ottawa. It's not what the people want on this side, but for 90% of our people—when this bill came out a few weeks ago, I had three phone calls. That's all I had. I think that there's generally acceptance by the people in Ottawa—Orléans; it's 35% francophone. Over half of my riding association are francophones. I sit on Team Ottawa—Orléans, which is a business group, and half of Team Ottawa—Orléans are francophones. It's working in Ottawa. It's going to work in this province.

We did what we said we would do. We've delivered, and I just hope that we move on in a nice way to make sure that Ottawa is and stays a bilingual city.

Mr. Lalonde: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just like to clarify what the member for Timmins—James Bay—

The Acting Speaker: You don't have a point of order, no. Take your seat.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Your comments are not being recorded by Hansard. You may take your seat.

We have time for one last question and comment. You've already had one, Nepean—Carleton.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Martel: I would like to thank all the members who participated.

Let me say this in response: If you want the city of Ottawa to be bilingual, then you pass a provincial statute to do just that. Have the guts to do what you said you would do during the last election, because let me tell you, this bill is a sham. It's a charade. And because we get up and expose that and make that clear, you call us divisive? Give me a break. What is divisive is you making an election promise that you had absolutely no intention of keeping.

Let me say this to the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell: You should read the bill, because if you would read the bill you would understand that the city, through the bilingualism policy, can amend that policy and could extinguish the rights that are in that policy tomorrow.

Read subsection 11.1(2), which says, "The scope and content of the policy"—that's in reference to the bilingualism policy that the city adopted—"adopted under subsection (1) shall be as determined by the city." So the city council tomorrow could make an amendment to the bylaw or change the bylaw to get rid of French-language services altogether.

Mr. Lalonde: Not true; not true.

Ms. Martel: If you would read it, Mr. Lalonde, you would understand that, and that is the point that we are making.

It was your leader who got up and told the former Premier, "Stand up for the rights of francophones in Ontario." Well, why don't you stand up for the rights of francophones in Ottawa and do what you promised? That was, to bring in a provincial statute that would declare the city of Ottawa officially bilingual. This bill doesn't do that. You know it. We know that you don't like it when we expose that. But the only people who are being divisive are you, by not doing what you promised.

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The Acting Speaker: It would appear that I have to remind the House of a few things. First of all, it's traditional that you make your comments through the Chair. Secondly, it's traditional that you refer to other members by their riding names, and third, that you maintain decorum in the House at all times.

Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: I've been through a lot of debates in this Legislature, and I find this one really, really tough in terms of the integrity of the government and the integrity of the Premier, in terms of what he said during the campaign and how he campaigned against the former government with respect to this issue.

If we go back and we talk about the amalgamation of the city of Ottawa, we brought together 11 municipalities into one. They ranged in francophone content from probably 1% or 2% up to 35% or 40%, and maybe there were some that even were in the majority. But as a whole, I think the people of Ottawa and the people of the former Ottawa-Carleton understood that we had a significant francophone minority in our city and our area, and that services had to be provided in the French language. That was their right. I don't think anybody in the greater Ottawa area now would deny that.

If you look at the map of Ottawa, the west would be dominated by a larger anglophone majority and a smaller francophone minority, whereas east of the Ottawa River, you would have a larger francophone minority and a smaller anglophone majority. So when the former government was trying to put the city together—and it's difficult to put the city together, particularly when you are a mayor, Mayor Chiarelli, who was fighting the Ontario government tooth and nail, because he was fighting the next provincial election. He was using every possible tool that he had at his disposal to embarrass the provincial government of the day.

Official bilingualism has not been a tremendously popular or successful policy at the federal level. There are many people who have suffered as a result of official bilingualism at the federal level. Notwithstanding that, I think Canadians as a whole accept that it perhaps was a step that had to be taken because they are our national government and because we have a large francophone population in our country. But as you try to amalgamate, bring partners together, get people working together, you can't all of a sudden impose rules that don't make sense in a local community when you're taking that local community and making it part of a larger community.

So we had the situation where we had the mayor coming, and the city council basically abrogating their responsibility in taking the decision to become officially bilingual or not, saying, "You, the province, have this responsibility to make us officially bilingual." Our government was saying, "If you want to make your city officially bilingual, go ahead and do it." But they didn't have the intestinal fortitude to go ahead and do that, because of course they knew it was poor policy.

Then the Liberals and the mayor got the support of Stéphane Dion, Sheila Copps, and even the former Prime Minister, Chrétien, who was saying to Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and everybody else, "You should"—the province—"make the city of Ottawa officially bilingual." There may come a day when that kind of policy makes sense, but we're not there at this particular time because the population isn't homogeneous. There are differences in different parts of the city of Ottawa where it is very, very difficult to argue that that kind of policy would make sense.

As we're trying to meld together a community, a community of very diverse interests—in some cases, an extremely rural community with a very urban area—we have this kind of phony war that took place when the

amalgamation took place. We had the Premier talking about the fact that it should be officially bilingual. I want to say to the member for Ottawa-Orléans: You might not be sitting here if the Premier had not said that. Maybe Brian Coburn would be sitting here if your Premier hadn't made that kind of promise during the election.

Mr. McNeely: I doubt it.

Mr. Sterling: You doubt it. But you're thinking that it might have been. So it had electoral effect. It had electoral effect, particularly in the east part of the city of Ottawa.

Mr. McNeely: Not in your riding.

Mr. Sterling: No, it wouldn't affect my riding, because I only have a 3% or 4% francophone population, so that particular part of the population would not be affected by a statement that you were going to have a bilingual city. In fact, it probably would have worked to the negative in my riding, and probably would benefit my election in terms of that part of it.

But you did a saw-off. The Premier did a saw-off in terms of what he said and what he did during the election. There was no question, when you read the press, about the promise that this government was going to make the city of Ottawa officially bilingual.

I agree with the member for Nepean-Carleton: This would be a very difficult thing to legislate for the city, particularly at this time. We're still early in terms of our growth as a city, of the city coming together and people trusting each other in terms of their wants and desires and what they're doing.

City council has essentially tried—for instance, before the last municipal election—to gerrymander the boundaries so that the rural areas would lose a lot of their representation. They held a few meetings. For instance, out in the west part of the city of Ottawa, they held one meeting in the Corel Centre, which is about 60 or 70 kilometres from the edge of the city of Ottawa, and most of the people weren't aware that they were talking about ward boundaries. Consequently, there was an appeal to the OMB. The city lost the appeal to the OMB, and so their gerrymandering didn't work.

Mayor Chiarelli and the Liberals who were in charge of the city of Ottawa were trying to embarrass the province of Ontario, the provincial government at that time. It's unfortunate, because what they did was to create a lot of divisiveness in the city. Then they came into this bilingual issue, and I think they really did capture the francophone vote in the last provincial election, to our detriment, and got people like Mr. McNeely in Ottawa-Orléans elected on the basis of that kind of promise.

I don't know how a francophone in Ottawa would say, "I can trust these people." I can't understand Jean-Marc and Madeleine coming into this place and defending this piece of legislation. It's embarrassing. The legislation says the city of Ottawa must have a French-language policy. You'd have to be an idiot, sitting on city council, to not have a French-language policy, because there is a significant presence of francophones in the city of

Ottawa. They are one of the two founding peoples in our country and in our province, and they are there in the city of Ottawa in large numbers, and you must respect them. Therefore, the city of Ottawa would always have a French-language policy. What kind of neanderthals would not have some kind of accommodation for the other founding people of our country? It just doesn't make sense.

If I were a member representing a city of Ottawa riding and I saw this bill coming forward, I've got to tell you what I would do. I would have said in caucus that I would rather not have a bill than have this. I'd rather go to the next election trying to explain why we didn't make Ottawa officially bilingual. I would rather have done that. I would rather have tried to help out the francophone minority in Ottawa with regard to their other hopes and desires in our city and to make Ottawa a more cohesive city as we went forward.

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As my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has said, we dealt with legislation this afternoon which was kind of a phony piece of legislation. It deals with how long contracts are going to be made with teachers, two or four years but not three, because that's going to be near an election year. Now we're into another piece of legislation, and members here on the opposition side are saying, "What are we doing back here in February, when this place costs"—what is it?—" \$150,000 to \$200,000 a day to run? Why are we here doing this with this kind of legislation?"

I don't know whether to support, vote against or sit down and abstain when a piece of legislation like this comes along. Quite frankly, it doesn't do anything for the city of Ottawa. It doesn't change anything one iota. I guess the reason you might want to vote against it is because, in my view, it's an insult to the francophone minority. I really believe that if I was a francophone in the city of Ottawa, I would say, "Hey, how can you possibly support a piece of legislation which is as phony as this piece of legislation?" It really doesn't have any kind of guts to it. In fact, it almost, as the member for Nickel Belt said, invites the city council to revisit their policy on French-language services and maybe water them down. I don't know.

When I lose a friend in this Legislature like Brian Coburn, who worked so hard for the people of eastern Ontario, and I see an issue like this, which may have cost him his seat, I get angry. I get real angry because I don't like a genuine guy like Bruce—Brian Coburn—

Mr. Bisson: I like Bruce Cockburn too.

Mr. Sterling: I like him too. But I don't like a guy like Brian Coburn losing his seat, or potentially losing his seat, over a promise like this, a promise that has been broken. I think every francophone in eastern Ontario should be ashamed of this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I'm going to do this in English, because the speech was in English and I want to make sure my

good friend understands, even though we have translation here.

I heard what you said at the beginning, but I really have to say I object and disagree with the statement that bilingualism is a failed policy that has hurt people. First of all, we need to recognize that there's a certain history in our country when it comes to the two founding nations, not to speak of the First Nations on top of that. We tried to recognize in our Constitution some years ago and we try to recognize in our institutions that there is a linguistic duality in our country, and to say it has been a failure—I think Canada has been a great success.

As I travel around the world, be it Vietnam, Europe, Africa, wherever it may be, Canada is viewed as a very big success story. One of the things that is a very big success story is the ability in this country for all of its people to live with a certain amount of respect that is not seen in many other places in the world. I think, if we look at various nations around this world where you have sections of different ethnicities that are fighting each other over stories that go back sometimes hundreds of years, this country has been very successful. And not to say what it has also meant for us as a people, because I think it makes our country richer, as far as being able to enjoy each other's culture.

The other great beauty of this country, and I think we can all agree, is the multicultural aspect that has grown above and beyond our two founding nations. This country has been made greater, not just by the fact that there were francophones and anglophones who first settled this country, but that we're finally starting to recognize that there were First Nations people here first and that there are other people who emigrated here after: the Chinese, the Portuguese, the Italians—I could go on—

Mr. Baird: Spanish in Dufferin county.

Mr. Bisson: —Spanish etc.—who have made this country a greater place to live. That's something that I just wanted to reflect on in my two minutes for comments.

Mr. Runciman: I want to compliment my colleague from Lanark-Carleton for his contribution here this evening.

I was particularly struck by his comments with respect to a former colleague, Mr. Coburn, and the impact that the promise to follow through on requiring the city of Ottawa to be officially bilingual might have had with respect to Mr. Coburn's fortunes in the election. Certainly, I share the member's view with respect to Mr. Coburn as a hard-working, dedicated representative of the people of his riding, but I think you can extrapolate that right across the province with respect to promises made by the Liberal Party of Ontario going into the last election campaign. I think there were 231 promises in their campaign platform.

Mr. Bisson: How many have they broken—197?

Mr. Runciman: Well over 40 of those promises have been broken, many of them very significant, in about a year and a half in office.

We can talk about Mr. Coburn and we can talk about good people like Doug Galt and Marcel Beaubien, very strong members of this assembly who worked very hard on behalf of their constituents and, by relatively narrow margins, lost that election and are no longer part of the assembly.

My colleague from Nepean used the term “electoral fraud.” Whether that’s parliamentary or not, I think that many Ontarians are concerned and I’m sure that group includes Franco-Ontarians in the Ottawa area who felt they had a commitment from the Liberal Party of Ontario with respect to their views on official bilingualism. That hasn’t happened. And it’s happened right across this province in so many instances, and good people are not here—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Baird: I want to compliment the member for Lanark–Carleton on particularly the latter part of his remarks. I don’t agree with everything he said, but the one thing I respect about the member for Lanark–Carleton is, he doesn’t lie. He’s honest. You may disagree with him, but he doesn’t say one thing before the election and another thing after the election.

I’m also surprised that the member from Lanark–Carleton couldn’t name a single francophone in the world who would think this was an election commitment that was honoured. Not a single francophone anywhere in the world can say that Jean-Claude supports this, Monique supports this or Claudette supports this. I don’t know a single francophone anywhere in the world who wouldn’t say, “This bill makes a lie of an election promise.”

I say to the member from Lanark–Carleton, maybe he could help me out. Maybe he could tell me of anyone who would agree that this bill is anything short of electoral fraud.

Ms. Martel: Very briefly, the member from Lanark–Carleton said that this bill really doesn’t provide for any change. All you have to do is go to the explanatory note and you can see that that’s very clear. The explanatory note says the following: “The new section 11.1 of the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 requires the city to adopt a policy respecting the use of the English and French languages in all or specified parts of the administration of the city and in the provision of all or specified municipal services by the city.”

Here’s the policy there. Frankly, the policy has been in place in the new city since May 9, 2001, so there’s no change there because this is already in effect in the city.

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The only thing I can see is that the bill allows for a council at a future date to actually amend this policy, to the point where it could even extinguish the policy. That right of the city comes under subsection (2), which says, “The scope and content of the policy”—that’s this—“adopted under subsection (1) shall be as determined by the city.” So it is very clear that at any point in time the city can amend this bilingual policy and may even extinguish some of the rights that people have now, which

was part of the reason, I think, that the former council came and asked the province to enshrine protections in a provincial statute so that changes couldn’t be made by a future city council.

This government isn’t doing that. This government hasn’t brought forward a provincial statute to enshrine Ottawa as a bilingual city, and it’s a shame that you are trying to portray this bill as doing something like that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lanark–Carleton has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Sterling: I’d like to say to the member for Timmins–James Bay that I don’t know whether I used the word “failure,” but if I did, it was probably too strong a word to use. I thought I’d said after that that it was a policy which was necessary in order to keep Canada together and to recognize our two founding nations, our founding people. But I guess what I wanted to portray was the difficulty that that policy had in my community in the west end of Ottawa. It had a very significant impact on the employment opportunities that many anglophones had in the western part of the city of Ottawa. Therefore, the move toward a bilingual city in Ottawa would be very difficult for them to accept, given the experience they have had with regard to federal bilingualism.

What we said and what we were dealing with at the time was basically a policy that is mirrored in this legislation, which says to the city of Ottawa, “You can make the decision. If you want to become officially bilingual, then you take that step as a municipality. You have the autonomy. You have the right to do it.” Quite frankly, I think the city council couldn’t do it successfully at this time, because they are trying to marry 11 parts of the city together. They are trying to weave it together and bring them all together as the new city of Ottawa.

I’m glad, as the member for Nepean–Carleton is, that this Legislature is not foisting official bilingualism on the people of Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Bisson: J’ai de la bonne nouvelle pour mes collègues ici ce soir : je ne prends pas toute mon heure. Imaginez-vous. Ce que je veux dire était pas mal dit par ma collègue M^{me} Martel, la membre de Nickel Belt, qui a fait le point assez clairement, je pense. Je n’ai pas besoin de répéter tout ce qu’elle a dit. Je « concur » avec tous ses commentaires faisant affaire avec l’historique de ce projet de loi. Mais il y a deux ou trois affaires que je veux dire dans ce débat.

Premièrement, c’était suggéré, monsieur le Président—et je parle directement à vous. Les membres libéraux disent que c’est très divisive de notre part, les membres de l’opposition, de parler de ces débats dans cette Chambre ce soir; que parce que nous autres, on veut avoir notre débat et on veut dire, nous, les néo-démocrates, que le gouvernement ne garde pas les ententes qu’ils ont faites avec les électeurs dans les dernières élections et que les conservateurs disent la même affaire, d’une manière ou d’une autre, on est en train de

diviser la ville d'Ottawa et on est en train de faire quelque chose qui est contre le nationalisme de ce pays qu'on appelle le Canada.

Je n'accepte pas ça pour deux secondes. Être capable de même dire ça dans cette assemblée, je pense, franchement, veut dire que le membre ne pense pas trop avant qu'il parle. La réalité, c'est que dans une démocratie, tous les députés de cette assemblée, qu'ils soient au gouvernement ou à l'opposition, ont le droit de parler sur un projet de loi. C'est un droit qui nous est conféré dans notre constitution.

Deuxièmement, si vous êtes un peu inquiets de ce débat, c'est parce que vous ne faites pas dans ce projet de loi ce que vous avez promis dans la première affaire, faisant affaire avec les promesses que vous avez faites dans la dernière élection.

On veut être très clair, et je n'ai pas besoin de longtemps pour le faire. Les libéraux, dans la dernière élection, ont adopté la même politique que le parti néo-démocrate et M. Hampton, mon chef, ont mis en avant dans la dernière élection. Cette politique est très simple : on dit que n'importe quelle municipalité dans la province de l'Ontario qui demande au gouvernement provincial un statut pour être capable d'accepter qu'une communauté est officiellement bilingue, on va le lui donner. Le Parti libéral a pris exactement la même position dans la dernière élection.

On avance par 16 mois et on arrive ici aujourd'hui, et le gouvernement provincial de M. McGuinty a un projet de loi, la Loi 163. Mon ami de Prescott-Russell dit—oh, c'est difficile de voir sans lunettes—: « Dis-moi où dans cette loi on dit que la municipalité a le droit de nier aux francophones de la ville d'Ottawa le droit d'avoir des services pour les francophones à travers la politique du bilinguisme officiel qu'a la ville d'Ottawa présentement. »

Je veux être bien clair. Si vous voulez regarder, monsieur Lalonde, la section 11.1(2) : « La cité établit la portée et le contenu de la politique adoptée en application du paragraphe (1) ».

En d'autres mots, comme M^{me} Martel a très bien expliqué, le conseil, en 1999, a établi une politique pour la ville d'Ottawa. Dans cette politique on dit que ça, c'est la manière dont les francophones veulent être desservis dans la ville d'Ottawa quand ça vient à être capables de—oh, thank you. Il y a quelqu'un qui m'amène des lunettes. Je suis content.

Là, ce qui arrive : quand quelqu'un arrive à la ville d'Ottawa et demande un service, et le service n'est pas donné, la personne peut dire : « Bien, selon votre politique, vous dites que j'ai le droit d'aller rechercher ces services. » Dans ce projet de loi, vous dites : « On va avoir une politique. On va exiger que la ville d'Ottawa ait une politique sur le bilinguisme officiel »—pas de problème; on est d'accord avec ce point-là—« mais la ville d'Ottawa peut à n'importe quel temps changer cette politique. »

Je vais vous montrer comment c'est facile. Vous passez ce projet de loi. Vous dites à la ville d'Ottawa :

« Vous êtes exigés d'avoir une politique officielle d'offrir aux francophones des services bilingues en français. C'est exigé selon la loi. » C'est là qu'on est d'accord. On confère ce droit à la municipalité d'Ottawa. Mais si dans le futur un conseil dit, celui-ci ou n'importe quel autre, « Moi, je n'aime pas la section 1 de la politique, je n'aime pas la section 2, je n'aime pas 3, je n'aime pas 4, je n'aime pas 5 », ils ont le droit de le faire, parce que vous avez dit dans votre projet de loi qu'ils ont le droit non seulement d'établir la politique mais d'amender la politique sur le bilinguisme officiel. Et ce qui peut nous rester, à la fin de la journée, c'est une politique qui dit, « Official Bilingualism Policy of the City of Ottawa / Politique officielle de la ville d'Ottawa sur le bilinguisme », puis un feuillet blanc. C'est ça, le point de ce projet de loi.

Je ne vais pas parler plus que ça—

Interjection.

M. Bisson : Mais, monsieur Lalonde, ça fait assez longtemps que je suis au Parlement. Je sais comment lire un projet de loi. Les personnes de la ville d'Ottawa avec qui nous avons fait affaire, y inclus la plupart de la communauté, que ce soit les activistes francophones ou les agences et les sociétés francophones d'Ottawa, ne sont pas d'accord avec votre gouvernement. Ils sont en train de dire : « Vous avez nié le droit à la ville d'Ottawa ce qu'ils ont demandé dans ce projet de loi et ce qui était dans votre promesse de la dernière élection. » Justement, M. Lalonde, vous connaissez M. Poirier, le député d'avant vous dans votre comté. Vous le connaissez bien. C'est lui qui est le président de l'ACFO. Vous avez entendu ses discours; et il est très clair.

Je ne vais pas prendre plus longtemps que ça dans ce débat à la deuxième lecture, parce que j'ai un amendement que je veux proposer demain à la ministre. Je pense qu'on est d'accord, madame la Ministre. On veut qu'Ottawa ait le droit non seulement d'établir une politique sur le bilinguisme pour la ville d'Ottawa, mais qu'on enchâsse cette politique dans la loi. Cet amendement est très simple. C'est seulement une partie, qui dit : « Une fois que la politique est établie, la seule manière de la changer est de revenir à ce Parlement. » On va voir demain; le comité siège demain à 10 h. On vous demande de venir, on va mettre en avant cet amendement puis on va voir jusqu'à quel point le gouvernement est préparé à faire ce qu'ils ont dit dans la dernière élection, et c'est de conférer à la ville d'Ottawa non seulement le droit d'établir une politique sur le bilinguisme officielle, ce qu'ils ont déjà le droit de faire, mais aussi de s'assurer que cette politique ne soit pas niée par un conseil au futur.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Mr. Baird: To general government.

The Acting Speaker: General government?

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker: I will turn to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, could you please send it to the standing committee on general government?

The Acting Speaker: So ordered.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of the Environment has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 2012.

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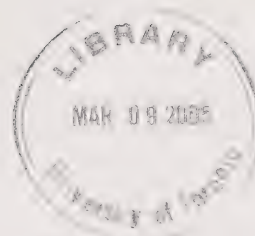
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Wednesday 2 March 2005

Mercredi 2 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DEER AND ELK FARMERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm joined by Bill Top, Todd Grignon and his son Adam, who are representing the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association.

Farmers are creative, hard-working, willing to take risks and willing to work with people to satisfy public perception. We have always been encouraged to diversify. Special interest groups have lobbied strongly and continue to work against us with the Ministry of Natural Resources to have our industry exterminated. We have come to the table and openly discussed their concerns. MNR spin doctors wage war and use deceptions to the public against farmers.

This proposed regulation has no science and no substance behind it. This proposed regulation is based only on perceptions. We are an agriculture industry. Our animals are farm-born and -raised. Farmers build their farms, their livelihoods and their businesses based on current rules and regulations, and designed with future trends in mind. Farmers built their business in full compliance with the law, and now this McGuinty government wants to take our businesses away.

A ministry backed by special interest groups wants to change those laws. We had no part in the process. We were not protected. The policies and rules were changed midstream. We need to be protected and governed by the Ministry of Agriculture, not the Ministry of Natural Resources. The ministry designed to protect the farmers is doing absolutely nothing pertaining to our issues.

We have had countless meetings with the Minister of Agriculture, and at the end of each meeting we are promised solutions and assistance; countless promises broken, countless commitments undelivered. We have proposed many options to the government, and they all have been denied.

Minister Peters, why do you not protect us? Minister Peters, how can a non-agriculture ministry dictate to farmers with no consultation with industry? Minister Peters, show us your commitment to deer and elk farmers, as we have not seen this yet.

Premier McGuinty, show us your commitment to agriculture. Premier McGuinty, you promised to make agri-

culture the strongest ministry in your cabinet. Premier McGuinty, please keep your promise.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

ROTARY CLUBS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): On February 23, I had the great pleasure of attending the Rotary Club of Canada's 100th birthday celebration in Peterborough at Trent University's Great Hall. The event was attended by members of the Rotary Club of Peterborough, the Rotary Club of Bridgenorth-Ennismore-Lakefield and the members of the Rotary Club of Peterborough-Kawartha. In honour of Rotary's centennial, the Honourable John Manley, who of course has held numerous federal cabinet positions, spoke to an audience of keen and dedicated Rotarians. The event was also attended by the Honourable Peter Adams, MP for Peterborough; master of ceremonies John McNutt; the mayor of Peterborough, Her Worship Sylvia Sutherland; and Warden Neil Cathcart.

Currently in the Peterborough area, Rotary is primarily involved in the Greenway Trail, which is a beautiful natural trail made out of the foundations of an abandoned railroad line which stretches from Little Lake in downtown Peterborough up through Trent University and on to Lakefield. Rotary members built the trail with determination and elbow grease. The highlight could very well be the wooden trestle bridge that links Peterborough and Omeme.

For years, the Peterborough area Rotary clubs have been involved with the Easter Seals campaign to help handicapped children. Another very popular Peterborough-Kawartha Rotary initiative is Camp Kawartha. Now co-ed, Camp Kawartha was originally founded as a boys' camp and has been providing magical summers for children and teens since 1921.

The Peterborough area Rotary clubs have also been involved with the Polio Plus program, dedicated to the annihilation of polio in the world. Every Victoria Day, Peterborough area Rotary helps to celebrate the occasion by providing a beautiful display of fireworks at Little Lake. This is enjoyed by adults and children alike.

The world watched in horror as a series of tsunamis swept over 11 countries, leaving 150,000 dead and thousands more homeless. The Rotary Club of Peterborough-Kawartha reacted quickly and was proud to offer this humanitarian effort \$5,000.

Rotarians of Peterborough, keep up the good work.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Farmers across Ontario are in an absolute crisis, and the Liberal government must take a leadership role to save the industry. Our Minister of Agriculture, Steve Peters, was once an advocate for our farmers, but since being promoted to Dalton McGuinty's cabinet, he has turned his back on the farmers. Steve Peters once said, "Ontario's grain and oilseed farmers have been hard hit by low commodity prices, poor weather conditions and increasing farm subsidies in both the United States and the European Union." Steve Peters was once a strong advocate for a \$300-million cash injection to save the province's cash crop industry, but I heard today that cash crop farmers are still waiting for, and badly need, this money.

Where has Steve Peters, the agriculture minister, gone? Why hasn't Steve Peters spoken up and continued to advocate for this necessary money? Why has Steve Peters turned his back on the cash crop farmers of Ontario? That \$300 million is not an inflated number. We are six weeks away from planting season, and farmers do not have the money to put the seeds into the ground.

Steve Peters used to support our farmers, but where is he here today? How could someone go from being a staunch supporter and advocate for this needed money to doing absolutely nothing when it's so needed? The clock is ticking: Planting season is only six weeks away. We need the government to invest in our farmers now.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Dalton McGuinty's Liberals are hell-bent on taking health care in Niagara region from bad to worse. Not only is the crisis in Niagara region not being addressed by the Liberals at Queen's Park, but it is being aggravated.

Let me give you some illustrations, especially in the area of mental health. A constituent, the mother of a 19-year-old boy suffering serious mental illness, can't get mental health treatment for this 19-year-old boy and is told by the police to have him arrested so that he can get treatment. The kid does three weeks in the detention centre, and still no mental health treatment; he finishes his sentence, and still no mental health treatment—problem unsolved, aggravated by the Liberals at Queen's Park.

Another woman has an eight-year-old grandson who has ADHD and needs to see a psychiatrist. He's been sent to the sexual treatment outpatient program at St. Catharines General—a four-month waiting list. This is an eight-year-old boy who is at incredibly high risk, who isn't even guaranteed to be treated in four months, simply being told that if he joins now, the time period is four months to await treatment and could be longer.

Another woman is looking for a psychiatrist in Welland without success, trying to address mental health problems. My staff went on to the College of Physicians

and Surgeons Web site that lists which doctors are accepting new patients. The nearest ones are in Hamilton.

What does this government do? This government forces Niagara into its mega-LHIN, into a supersized LHIN, which is going to bury the interests and needs of people in Niagara, when it comes to health care, and leave them at the end of the line.

1340

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I want to take this opportunity to welcome the many farmers who have gathered here today at Queen's Park. I want to let the farmers throughout Ontario and those here today know that we are here to listen to what you have to say and that we value your input. I also want to thank you for your hard work, your leadership and your patience in the face of trying times.

I represent a rural riding. As such, I know how important farmers are to our local economy and to the economy of our province and our country. It's no secret that our farmers are facing many new challenges these days. I know, because I get the letters and the phone calls, attend the farm meetings and hear directly from my farm constituents, both back home and here today right on the lawn and right on the front steps of our Legislative Assembly.

I want to reassure the farmers that we will always be here to listen to their concerns. That is why we are meeting with farm leaders from all across the province.

Like our farmers, this government is dedicated to moving forward on critical issues to ensure that farming remains a viable and sustainable way of life here in Ontario.

This government has moved to bring funding to the table for BSE, drainage, abattoirs, enhanced food safety and product promotion, to name just a few. Why? Because we know that our farmers are the very backbone of our province.

We know that there are challenges ahead and there are no magic answers. That said, like our farmers, we're in this for the long run, and we intend to stand with our farmers every single step of the way.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): There'll be no long run for farmers if this government gets its way.

I had the opportunity today to stand with thousands of farmers out on the front lawn covered in snow, who arrived here by bus and by tractor to deliver a message to this government: There has never been a level of frustration among our farmers like we are finding today.

This government, which promised that agriculture would be a lead ministry, has reneged on that promise. In fact, they have cut funding—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'll give you a chance to make your comments. I'm going to ask the members to be quiet. I'd like to hear the member from

Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke give his statement uninterrupted.

Mr. Yakabuski: In fact, this government has cut funding to agriculture.

Farming is going through the biggest crisis in memory—low prices, unfair competition, and no support from this government—while at the same time, this government is burdening them with over-regulation. They have no money to get their crops in the ground, yet they want them to pay for nutrient management.

For farmers in the province of Ontario, to quote the great author John Steinbeck, this is the winter of their discontent. While this government has money for casinos in Windsor—\$400 million—it has not kept its promises. I heard plenty from farmers today. I heard words from farmers today about what they think of this Liberal government. Well, I can tell you one thing, and they'd better get the message: Farmers do keep their promises.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I know that the member from Huron–Bruce would like to make a member's statement. I'd like to start so she can get her full complement of time. That is the reason for that delay.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): As a member representing one of the most rural ridings in Ontario, I wish to tell the Legislature about a vital part of our province, and that's rural Ontario.

In rural Ontario, we value education. Our government has recognized the special needs of our rural schools. The new funding formula acknowledges that our rural schools have very large catchment areas. The McGuinty government is supporting all schools by providing funding for much-needed repairs and renovations. After 10 years of neglect, this is very welcome news in our rural communities, especially for small schools in need of repair or slated for closure.

Rural Ontario also values our health care facilities. Small hospitals, long-term-care facilities, community health centres and home support services are critical to our small rural Ontario towns. I am pleased that this government is supporting those needs. The Ministry of Health just announced that they have received over 200 applications for family health teams. I can tell you, in our rural ridings this is good news: a service that will be available from one spot.

The government has also helped launch the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, which will help with the critical infrastructure that is required in our rural communities.

Rural Ontario contributes to the province, and with new funding it will be able to make an even greater contribution. Not only am I proud to represent rural Ontario; I am very proud of a government that understands rural Ontario.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I rise today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to agriculture.

Today, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has gone to extra lengths to ensure that their concerns are heard here at Queen's Park. They are here today to get the message out that these are tough times for many of our farmers. I spent my morning today out on the front lawn speaking with those assembled and was fortunate to be able to meet farmers from my riding of Perth–Middlesex for lunch.

Since Perth–Middlesex is the most productive agricultural riding in Ontario, I'm quite familiar with many of these issues, but I always welcome the opportunity to speak to Ontario farmers, as I know do Minister Peters and Premier McGuinty. Speaking with and, more importantly, hearing farmers is the best way we can get a better understanding of both their broad and individual concerns. In fact, after attending the demonstration today, Minister Peters travelled to Ottawa to attend the federal/provincial/territorial agricultural ministers' meeting and conference. Knowing the importance of being here today, Minister Peters postponed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'll give you time to finish your statement, if the members would stop heckling.

The member for Perth–Middlesex.

Mr. Wilkinson: As I was saying, Minister Peters is on his way to Ottawa to help close that gap in funding that we have with the federal government. Knowing the importance of being here today, Minister Peters postponed his trip this morning so that he could be right here at Queen's Park to be with our farmers first-hand.

Today's rally, along with the minister's voice, will send a strong message to Ottawa that Ontario's farmers need their fair share. The opposition should join us and support our Minister of Agriculture as he goes to Ottawa and gets the money that we need in this province.

BSE

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia–Lambton): Since May 20, 2003, the US border has been closed to Canadian beef. It is hoped that in just five days it will once again reopen to live cattle.

The consequences of BSE have hit Ontario farmers hard. There were times when farmers didn't know when the border would reopen. They were worried, and they had hundreds of head of cattle but no one to sell to.

We responded to the BSE crisis with a comprehensive federal aid package worth \$410 million. This was part of a long-term strategy developed in consultation with the provinces, territories and industry groups, and was designed to ensure the long-term viability of Canada's beef industry. On top of that, it included continuing efforts to reopen the US border. Those efforts have paid

off, and now we look forward to the resumption of trade in live cattle with the US, scheduled for March 7, 2005.

But more must be done. That's why Minister Peters recently led a delegation of Canadian and Ontario agricultural leaders to the US to meet with the US government and travelled with Minister Mitchell on a second trip to Washington.

I want to reassure the farmers here today and those back home that this government will continue to work toward full resumption of trade.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise on a very serious point, fundamental to the accountability and the checks and balances in our parliamentary system. The opposition is particularly concerned that we have been notified of the absence of almost half of the cabinet. The Minister of Agriculture was seen a few moments ago in the tunnel between this place—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Scurrying.

Mr. Baird: "Scurrying," one member says. I was hoping you could seek some guidance—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm sure all members are busy doing the work of the people who elected them.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm very proud today to introduce to you Jackie Vandenberg, who is an outreach worker with the Ontario Early Years Centre in Simcoe North. She is in the Speaker's gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): We welcome all visitors to the assembly, but the chief whip knows the process by which people are introduced.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have question period coming up and I understand the agriculture minister is

not going to be here, so I'm sending this chicken to the desk.

The Speaker: The member from Toronto–Danforth almost went out with that chicken.

I want to take a moment to recognize, in the members' gallery, Paul Klopp, the former member of the provincial Parliament who represented the riding of Huron in the 35th Parliament. Join me in welcoming him.

I also would like to welcome John Parker, in the gallery, the member for York East in the 36th Parliament.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier. It's truly regrettable that the Minister of Finance didn't see fit to attend today, because we've been made—

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): There are too many speakers here. The government House Leader on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Too late.

The Speaker: Shall we start now? Can I ask for the clock to start again. Now it is time for oral questions. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Runciman: My question is to the Acting Premier. We have been made aware of some additional disturbing information that may be directly connected to the secret \$10,000-per-person fundraiser held last May at the Sorbara home. We're now advised that the development on the 150,000 acres, the so-called peach fuzz, south of the greenbelt boundary, much of it prime farmland owned by developers, is wide open for development today, despite your government's assurances that this would not happen. On one hand, your greenbelt plan attacks the interests of real, legitimate farmers, and on the other, developers who can afford to fork out \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear are rewarded.

Acting Premier, do you not see how important it is that you now reveal the names of the individuals who attended the secret soirée and may have benefited from doing so?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm going to refer the question to the minister responsible for public infrastructure renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): The information that the leader of the official opposition has presented is not correct. In fact, the land that the member mentions is currently undesignated in municipal official plans, and it would be up to official

plan amendments of the normal planning process of the various municipalities to then designate.

Now, I should tell you, of course, that our Places to Grow plan identifies that, within the current urban envelope, there are some 20 years of land supplied for both residential and commercial-industrial development. We will be having a future conversation with municipal officials about what the future of those lands will be, but it will happen within the normal planning process.

Mr. Runciman: One of my colleagues said, "Places to grow the Liberal bank account." That's a cop-out response. This smells to high heaven.

We see, in the media today, Rob MacIsaac, who's the chair of the Greenbelt Task Force, saying that the boundaries for the greenbelt were set in the Premier's office. We know that the minister, responding to this question in October, said that there would be a requirement for 40% intensification in the municipalities before any growth was allowed to occur in this area. What's happened here is that this government has shafted farmers in the greenbelt area: no compensation for confiscation. They have a secret fundraiser—\$10,000 a head at the Sorbara household—and, surprise, surprise, developers now get the green light for 30 years of urban sprawl in this area that the government said was going to be protected. Will you now do the right thing and release the names of the people who attended this secret soirée at the Sorbara home?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Well, it's certainly a lot of sound and fury by the member opposite. I want you to know that a million additional protected acres by our government is a tremendous legacy that your government would never—you guys want to pave it all. Come on, give us a break.

We're working with municipal officials, we're working with environmentalists and, yes, we are working with the industry to be able to grow in a much different way because of the lack of vision by your government previously. If we had left it up to the previous government, we would pave over this entire province. Well, that's not going to happen under our government. We're going to grow in a better and more effective way.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Back to the minister: One person who will not be on the \$10,000-a-person list for the Sorbara mansion fundraiser is Lidia Kuleshnyk. Lidia has been representing a group of farmers in the Ajax area where the greenbelt cut their farms in half. She came to Queen's Park. She made her point. She did not have a single meeting, as far as we know. She didn't see the science behind that decision. She didn't have her chance for appeal. She wakes up Monday morning and now finds out her entire farm and that entire row of farms in north Ajax are in the greenbelt, the opposite of what they were asking for.

Lidia Kuleshnyk and those farmers cannot afford to pay \$10,000 each to go to a fundraiser at the Sorbara mansion. I say to the minister, if they can't pay the \$10,000, how do they get their appeal? What can you say

to farmers who want to have their fair day in court as well?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I repeat once again that the lands that are included in the greenbelt plan can all be justified on the basis of science that was established either by the Ministry of Natural Resources or the LEAR system under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Besides, in the particular area you're talking about around Ajax, we acted upon the official plan for the town of Ajax, plus we acted upon a resolution from the town of Ajax by the duly elected council to include those lands within the greenbelt, and we did that because it's based on good science and good planning.

1400

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

A question to the Acting Premier: As you are aware, and hopefully your Minister of Agriculture is aware, there are thousands of people on the front lawn of Queen's Park today, protesting this government's inaction with respect to the challenges that the farming community and rural Ontario are facing today. We've heard the sounds of honest working people who don't have \$10,000 each to donate to the Liberal Party. They have to get your attention the old-fashioned way, and I hope they've been loud enough to get your attention. I hope their shouts have penetrated the blankets that your Minister of Agriculture is holding over his head in some bed in the basement.

Acting Premier, your party broke your promise to make agriculture a lead ministry in the Liberal government by slashing spending on agriculture by 20% in your first year. Your Premier says his top priority is a swanky new \$400-million casino hotel in a Liberal riding, while your agriculture minister holds \$300-per-person fundraisers with anti-farming activists. Farmers in Ontario this year will lose \$229 million compared to a \$1-billion net income for farmers in the rest of Canada. Farmers have come here for answers. Acting Premier, why have you clearly turned your back on Ontario farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have the opportunity to stand in the House and say how very much this government welcomes the visitors who have come to Queen's Park today. They have made their points in a very effective and peaceful way. I myself had the opportunity over the lunch hour to go out there and walk with them. I know that the Minister of Agriculture was out there with them from 10:30 this morning, I believe, until he left the city, on his way to Ottawa to take their message to the government in Ottawa.

We understand that agriculture and farmers in this province are in crisis. Our government is acting, we're listening, and this Minister of Agriculture is very effective.

tive. He has gone to take their message to Ottawa to get them what they deserve so we can continue to have a strong, viable agriculture industry in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary? The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Acting Premier, you will know, as was mentioned in the first question, that there were thousands of farmers on the lawn. They were hoping to be able to come to Queen's Park and speak to the politicians and then hopefully be given the opportunity to have the minister answer questions in the House. Obviously, the minister did not feel that was important, so he chose not to be here. I also didn't see the Premier there, so I guess the Premier has turned his back on agriculture too.

Acting Premier, why is your government saddling farmers with increased costs of doing business at this point in history? In six weeks, our farmers will be planting, and many cannot afford to put seed in the ground. Ontario farmers lost over \$229 million this year alone. When will we have an agriculture minister who will stand up and fight for Ontario's farmers? When will we have a minister who will take charge of this disaster? When will we have a minister whose voice will not only be heard but listened to? It's clear to our farmers that Mr. Peters would rather hobnob at \$300-a-plate—

The Speaker: Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm delighted to have this opportunity to say to the people of Ontario and the people in this House that we have one of the strongest agriculture ministers that this province has ever seen. And what is the evidence of that? Let me tell you. I can say, because I know, that at the cabinet table, whether we talk about health care, whether we talk about education, whether we talk about energy, this Minister of Agriculture is making the views of that community known and heard. We have implemented—we have active policies in this province in all those areas to support rural Ontario.

Do you want to know where the Minister of Agriculture is today? He's in Ottawa fighting for Ontario farmers, fighting for our fair share. That's the kind of Minister of Agriculture we have here in Ontario, and I'm proud to serve with him.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Niagara Centre, come to order, please. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: Madam Minister, you can't blow that one by the farmers. On the biggest farming awareness day of the year, where's our Premier? Where's our Minister of Agriculture? Why does Steve Peters see the need to be on the lawn shaking hands but then not returning here for question period? Farming is in crisis, and it's a sad time when the Minister of Agriculture doesn't even bother to show up to fight for farmers.

Acting Premier, in the 2004 budget, your government slashed safety net support for crop stabilization by \$50 million, a 33% cut.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Guelph–Wellington.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services, if you would come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'll be starting to warn members, because we're going to have a good question period today. I think we were at the final supplementary of the member from Oxford.

Mr. Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue. Acting Premier, in the 2004 budget, your government slashed safety net support for crop stabilization by \$50 million, a 33% cut; This at a time when the Ministry of Agriculture saw its administrative budget skyrocket by \$11 million, or a 68% increase. Once again, Minister Peters—oh, I'm sorry, he's not here. Acting Premier, the numbers don't lie. You cut monies previously spent to help farmers in favour of rewarding Queen's Park bureaucrats—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question's been asked.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I think it's important to remind the members of this House that when people came to this place to make their views known, members from this government and this cabinet went out to the front lawn. We spoke with those people. We talked to them, unlike when you were in government. You brought in the police and you brought in the barricades and you built a wall around the members of the government. We went out there; we're talking to them. They're the people that we represent.

You asked what this Minister of Agriculture has done for the farming community in Ontario. One of the first things he did was sign the agricultural policy framework, which your government wouldn't do. That enabled our farmers to access \$1.7 billion that you prevented them from accessing. That's what this Minister of Agriculture has done.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Thousands of Ontario farmers came to Queen's Park today to deliver a clear message to the McGuinty government. There is a serious farm viability crisis in Ontario, and they have a beef with your lack of a plan and your inaction. It's never been tougher to be a farmer in Ontario, never tougher than it is now. Farm incomes are in free fall. For the first time ever in the history of Ontario, farmers have a negative income. I heard a lot of heart-wrenching stories from people who are afraid of losing everything. Acting Premier, what's your plan for Ontario agriculture? What's your plan for the farmers who produce Ontario's food?

1410

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to speak about the good work that the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Agriculture have done to support the agriculture industry in Ontario. I think it's also important to report to the members of this House that because we are

very aware of the crisis there is an agriculture in Ontario, the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture met with eight leaders of the agriculture community just last week. I believe it's a responsible approach to work with the representatives from the agriculture community, to understand from them exactly where and exactly how this government can best respond to the crisis they are now facing.

You were outside; you heard the farmers. I heard the farmers. They recognize that many of the issues that they're made to face right now are not of their making and not of our making. But together we've got to work with them to get them through it.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I asked for a plan, and as usual from the McGuinty government, we hear a lot of wordage and no plan. Let me tell you, the farmers out there think so much of what you're doing that 7,000 came here today not to congratulate you but to tell you that you're missing the boat and you're risking their very incomes.

They don't need any more Dalton McGuinty "I feel your pain" speeches. They need a plan. They need to see that you have something to work in the short term and something to work in the longer term. They are risking everything, and so far they see nothing from the McGuinty government; nothing at all except more press releases that don't add up to a plan. Deputy Premier, Acting Premier—whatever you want to call yourself today—what's the McGuinty government plan so that people who produce our food can afford to stay on the land and can afford to produce the food for Ontario consumers?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government has recognized the importance of the second-largest industry in Ontario, the industry that feeds us. That is why the Minister of Agriculture signed the agriculture policy framework. That is why this Minister of Agriculture has provided \$138 million to support farmers and assist them through the BSE crisis. That is why we have recently announced a \$6-million drainage program. That why we are moving forward with our ethanol strategy, which is going to support agriculture in the province of Ontario as well. That is why, unlike the previous government, we have directed dollars toward supporting the largest farms in Ontario to meet the nutrient management commitments; we've put \$20 million aside.

Maybe for the NDP those millions of dollars don't mean anything. That's not what I heard from the farmers out there. The reality is, we have more to do, our Premier and our Minister of Agriculture are prepared to do it, and they're working with the farm community to find the solutions that will work for them.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I asked for a plan. You mentioned ethanol. I met with a list of corn farmers from the Chatham area earlier this morning. Let me tell you something. Your Premier goes down to Chatham and talks about ethanol. Those corn farmers who live within five and 10 kilometres of that ethanol plant are going broke. Do you know why? Because your ethanol plant

doesn't use Ontario corn. Your ethanol plant uses corn that comes from Michigan and Ohio and is subsidized. Farmers in the Chatham area aren't going to plant corn this year because the McGuinty government is subsidizing the operation of ethanol plants that use American corn. Is that what you call a plan?

Insurance rates are going through the roof, hydro rates are escalating, the cost of doing almost everything on the farm is going through the roof, and all you've got to offer is importing American corn? Where's the McGuinty government plan for our farmers?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Obviously the honourable member is not paying attention to the good work that has been done so far by the government. He doesn't understand that we continue to work with representatives from the agriculture community. They brought their message here; they're very eager to work with the Premier and with the minister so that, going forward, we can provide resources in areas that will meet their needs.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Renfrew–Nipissing, come to order.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our Minister of Agriculture has also recognized—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Renfrew–Nipissing, I'm going to give you a warning. The next time I'll be naming you.

Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our minister has also recognized that while we are dealing with a very serious crisis in the agriculture industry, and we do have a role and we can help farmers, the federal government also has a very key role to play in ensuring that our industry is sustained and remains strong in the province of Ontario. He has gone to make his case with the other ministers of agriculture from across Canada. This is a national issue, and I'm very confident that our Minister of Agriculture is going to make the points that need to be made so that he can—

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Acting Premier: some of the farmers I met with today wonder, how can Quebec provide their farmers with floor prices? You say this is a national problem. They're wondering, how can Quebec provide their farmers with floor prices so they can afford to produce? Your Premier went down to Chatham and used the Chatham ethanol plant as a place to deliver one of his "promise" speeches, and do you know what? The farmers who live within 10 or 15 kilometres of that plant and produce corn can't sell corn to that plant. That tells us just how out of touch your government is, how out of touch the McGuinty government is, with the plight of farmers. You say it's a national problem. Tell me, why can Quebec afford to support their farmers when the McGuinty government is importing subsidized corn from the United States?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First of all, I think it's important to remind the honourable member that the ethanol initiative that we have underway is going to be good for

our environment; it's going to provide 3,000 new jobs in Ontario. The Minister of Agriculture is working on a strategy that will enable the ethanol producers to access more domestic corn.

I want to say, with respect to his issue around the way the Quebec government supports their farmers, that they're using our money to do it, my friend. That's why Minister Peters has gone to Ottawa to get our fair share. Is it fair that other provincial governments in Canada are in a position to provide that support and we are actually funding those subsidy programs?

Mr. Hampton: Maybe then you can tell us, did the Minister of Agriculture go to meet with the federal Minister of Agriculture today? Did he go to whine, or did he go to blame? You're trying to do one and the same thing. One minute you're whining, and the next minute you're blaming.

The question is this, Minister: You say that Ontario farmers should be proud of your government's ethanol strategy. Your government's ethanol strategy is bringing in subsidized corn from Ohio and Michigan while Ontario corn farmers go broke, while they lose everything. Is it the McGuinty government position that those farmers should be happy about that?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: It is the position of this Minister of Agriculture that we will work to ensure that more domestic corn will be able to be used in our ethanol strategy. He has recognized that there are issues, and we're working to ensure that ethanol that is produced in Ontario is made from Ontario corn.

With respect to the issue around the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa, he is there to represent the issues of Ontario farmers at the federal table with all the other ministers of agriculture, where he should be. That's exactly where we want our provincial voice: speaking out for farmers about the issues that Ontario farmers have to deal with. We want the federal government to provide the kind of support that they should be providing, to help our farmers deal with the crises they are dealing with, some of them because of a national impact.

Mr. Hampton: We're still listening to hear the plan. Last week, I met with farmers in the Orangeville area with our candidate, Lynda McDougall. This is what some of those farmers told us: Ontario's 21,000 beef farmers have lost over \$200 million, Ontario sheep farmers have lost money and Ontario dairy farmers are also losing money.

What they're wondering is this: They see your government has \$500 million for auto investment, they see that you have \$125 million for investment in film and television production in Toronto and they see that you have \$400 million for investment in the casino in Windsor—again, your argument is that this will sustain jobs—but what they want to know is, if you've got a \$1 billion for investments in these sectors to sustain jobs, where's the investment strategy for Ontario farmers who are rapidly going out of business?

1420

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I've shared this information with the member. I'm very happy to do it again,

to talk about all the good work the Minister of Agriculture has done and will continue to do to support farmers in Ontario. We have provided resources to help farmers with the BSE crisis: \$138 million. We have provided resources to assist with the ruminant situation, to assist with dead stock. We have provided additional resources for nutrient management.

I think it's important for all of us to remember that we are in a very unusual time, that there are many reasons why the agriculture industry is in crisis in Ontario today. Our Premier and our Minister of Agriculture are prepared to work with the agricultural representatives to help them identify what more we can do. I'm sharing with you what our efforts have been so far. I believe there is more we can do, and I know that our—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question was for the ag minister, who is undoubtedly feeling some pressure today, so to the Acting Premier: Your ag minister yesterday questioned where my loyalties lie. I've been outside talking to farmers since eight this morning. My loyalties are to farmers, to rural people. I don't discriminate. I don't judge what they farm or what organization they belong to. Acting Premier, farmers outside say your ag minister is a puppet. They say he has abandoned them. Your government has to stop blaming others for your shortcomings. Your government has to stop trying to divide and conquer. While your ag minister was mudslinging yesterday, he neglected to answer questions from myself and the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. Will you stand in your place today—we've had thousands of farmers here—and commit the \$300 million for cash crop farmers—

The Speaker: Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I want to remind the honourable member that the Minister of Agriculture was out speaking with the farmers who came here to Queen's Park today. He was out there for hours to listen to them and to hear their concerns. I also want to remind the honourable member that the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture last week met with the elected representatives of farming communities from across Ontario, because we are aware of the crisis they're in. The Premier and the minister want to understand directly from these representative groups what we can do, exactly the very best way we can move forward the kind of support they need. Some of that can be regulatory changes. Some of that is additional funding for programs.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant doesn't seem to want the answer. You're shouting down the minister. Is there a supplementary? The member from Lanark-Carleton.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Farmers from eastern Ontario are not going to have enough money to plant crops this spring.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, I'm going to give you a warning. I would

like to hear the member from Lanark—Carleton's supplementary.

Mr. Sterling: Farmers in eastern Ontario are not going to have enough money to plant crops in the spring. Your minister, shortly after being elected in 2003, went up to Ottawa and signed an agreement, the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, which has proved to be a disaster in terms of what it provides our farmers. It's also a mess. When can our farmers expect not their 2004 cheques but their 2003 cheques so they can plant their crops in the spring?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The Minister of Agriculture has recognized that there are serious problems with the CAIS program, that it's not meeting the goals it was intended to meet. However, the minister has indicated he is looking forward to ensuring that those cheques are delivered to the farmers before the spring planting.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto—Danforth): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Prime agricultural lands were excluded from the greenbelt; it was pointed out to you time and time again. I made an amendment to have them included, but all the Liberal members on the committee voted against it. We wondered why. Lo and behold, there are now allegations that developers who attended your secret \$10,000-per-plate fundraiser own some of these lands.

Minister, you have been dithering time and time again on your election promise of real-time disclosure for over a year. Now is the time to clear the air. Will you tell us today who was at that fundraiser, or do you have something to hide?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The minister responsible for democratic renewal will answer that.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yes, we are going to be bringing in laws that will require real-time disclosure. In the interim, Premier McGuinty said to the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, "Why don't we all play by the same rules, and why don't we all have real-time disclosure?" He did this on October 28, 2004. What's your answer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Government House leader, please come to order. I would like to hear the member from Toronto—Danforth's supplementary.

Ms. Churley: Minister, that answer is getting very tired. But right now, you have a major scandal brewing here. It's in your interest to keep your promise and disclose who was at that dinner. You're stalling, it looks like you're stalling and the people of Ontario can smell that you're stalling. They know you're trying to hide something here.

Let me repeat: During the election campaign, you said that people had a right to know who funded your party

and that you'd ensure they knew right away. Last October, the Premier stood in this House and said, "If you are prepared to go there, then we're prepared to go there right away." Instead, you've stalled. And now we learn that while you were setting the final boundaries for your greenbelt, developers who wanted their lands excluded were paying \$10,000 to spend quality time with your Premier and the finance minister. Will you disclose the names of those who attended that dinner?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member knows that the name of every donor is disclosed to the public through Elections Ontario. You know that. The question is the timing. Why won't the New Democratic Party, why won't the Progressive Conservative Party, accept the challenge that Premier McGuinty made in October, November and month after month after month? The silence is deafening.

I think I've got an answer. I think I know why they won't accept the challenge. We just heard last weekend that Mr. Tory has raised \$2.5 million since he's been leader. That's \$15,000 a day. Why won't the Conservatives accept Dalton McGuinty's challenge and agree to real-time disclosure now?

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

Interjections.

Mr. Ruprecht: Why don't you listen? You might learn something.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Why don't you direct your question to the Chair.

Mr. Ruprecht: I will, as soon as I get a chance.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member from Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Show some respect for the Chair, Tony.

1430

The Speaker: Order. I'm now going to warn the member from Simcoe North to come to order. That's your first warning.

Mr. Ruprecht: Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America according to numerous consumer awareness associations and law enforcement agencies. In order to combat this growing crime, our government has taken action in recent months with the launching of our identity theft statement and partnership with industry at large. I want to congratulate this minister and commend him for producing these brochures in languages of the ethnic community, because it is so important for them to understand that identity theft is a growing problem. So thank you, Minister.

However, most of these initiatives have consumer focus, and the minister should know that our government is doing everything it can to ensure—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Mr. Speaker, I can listen to this member all afternoon.

It's rare that I get a question. I can't even remember who my critic is on the—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. When I sit and I hear shouting across, I'll give you a warning.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I think that was the junior member from Nepean, Mr. Speaker. He obviously wasn't given permission for a question today.

I want to thank the member for Davenport for his consistent interest in the issue of identity theft. As he rightly pointed out, identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America.

On Monday this week I was pleased to be in my hometown of Ottawa, where we launched a new information kit aimed at giving businesses useful tips and information on how to avoid the theft of information. I was there with the president of the Retail Council of Canada, Diane Brisebois, the chief of the Ottawa Police Service, Vince Bevan, as well as the federal privacy commissioner and other interested parties.

The information kit provides the kind of information that both employers and employees need to avoid identity theft in their places of business. It is going to provide valuable information for these individuals, not only to save money for themselves and their businesses but also, quite frankly—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Ruprecht: These crimes are growing because more personal information is collected and retained than ever before, and the risk of identity theft multiplies every time it is transmitted or retained in an unsafe manner.

I have heard from my constituents—I know you have too—of the government's need to educate businesses on how to reduce their risk of identity theft and how to take action should they become victims. I understand that we have launched an information campaign geared toward businesses.

Can you explain how the identity theft kit for business can be obtained so that the right people have the right information; and are you prepared to enact legislation to protect consumers if this information campaign is not effective?

Hon. Mr. Watson: That's one of the tougher questions I've had since being a minister, and I thank the member very much.

First of all I want to thank Visa Canada. Visa Canada was at the forefront of a partnership that we developed with the federal and provincial consumer ministers across the country. Secondly, the information is available free of charge to businesses. It's available on our Web site, serviceontario.ca, which is very easily accessible to businesses. Finally, as the member pointed out—and he represents a riding that has many different cultures and languages—the identity theft brochure is available and has been sent to all members and government information centres in seven different languages, because new Canadians are often some of the most vulnerable targets

of these scam artists. We're very pleased to provide the information in their languages.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Acting Premier: As you saw today, corn producers, grape growers, tender fruit producers are becoming increasingly concerned about the McGuinty government's assault on farmers and their way of life. The latest example is your "greenbotch" legislation, which, I remind you, in section 6 gives extraordinary powers to the minister to limit any kind of building on a farmer's lot. The proposals that you have on the table would effectively limit any value-added operations to the extent that any winery that currently exists in the province could never be built in the greenbelt area. Cherry-pitting operations that contribute to agriculture could not be built under that set of rules.

Sadly, the government always characterizes farmers who object as speculators instead of as having legitimate concerns about the regulations that you're bringing forward with your greenbelt legislation. In fact, Paul Misteale from OFA says it's the most draconian piece of legislation ever faced by farmers. Acting Premier, are they speculators, or do they have legitimate concerns?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me make it abundantly clear that this government does not regard farmers as speculators. That is your interpretation, sir. We regard farmers as being in an honourable profession. It is a very important profession. What we are doing in the greenbelt is to ensure that farming and the—

Mr. Hudak: Then why are they objecting?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member from Erie-Lincoln, come to order. I give you a warning. You asked a question, and the minister is trying to respond.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: What we want to make sure of with the greenbelt legislation is that farming will continue. We made extra provisions in our greenbelt plan to make sure that not only the current farming that's being carried out on the good agricultural land within the greenbelt can continue but also that modern and more modern new processes that may come along within the agricultural industry can be accommodated there. We think it's extremely important, not only for this generation but for generations to come, that the good agricultural lands that are within the greenbelt area be preserved for farming, the way it should be.

The Speaker: The member from York North has a supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): To the Acting Premier: I have yet another example of your and your government's assault on rural Ontario. Your election platform identified a commitment to 5% ethanol content in gasoline by 2007. A few moments ago, you said that

your government was working on an Ontario solution. Yet the Ontario Corn Producers' Association developed a business plan with broad stakeholder support; you didn't listen.

Minister, will you explain to this House why you are so committed to an arbitrary date of 2007 that will, according to the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, shut out Ontario's corn producers and processors? Why are you not listening to them?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Speaker, I'm not sure if it's in order, since the first question was on the greenbelt, but I'm very happy to talk about our ethanol initiative and our ethanol commitment. The reason 2007 is our first target date and 2010 is our second target date is that we are committed to improving air quality in the province. This is cleaner gas. We made that commitment during the campaign. This is going to be good for farmers in Ontario. Certainly, the farmers in Cornwall who produce corn, the farmers in Brantford who produce corn, think this is a good strategy. We know that it's going to be better for the environment, because we're going to have cleaner gas, and it's keeping a commitment that we made during the campaign.

HEALTH RECORDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. Last week, as you recall, private medical tests went missing in my community. They were stolen from a van that was contracted to deliver personal and private health information to clinics and hospitals in the area. We know that one individual was disciplined. We know that couriers won't be leaving people's medical tests out in the open any more. But we still don't know how many test results were lost, how many patients had their privacy violated.

Minister, what do you have to say to those in Niagara region who are now wide open to the very identity theft that your member from Davenport just asked your Minister of Consumer and Business Services about? Can you please respond?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can. I'll respond along the same lines as I did last week, which is that this is a matter that we take extremely seriously. We work very, very hard to make sure that the personal information of individuals is protected. This is job one.

The member, in her very question, indicated that—in examination of the circumstances that went down, we're always seeking to improve those, and as a result, measures have been taken to make sure that this is the case in the future. We continue to work, through the appropriate bodies, to make sure that any information we have is properly conveyed to the individuals who are affected. This is what we'll continue to do.

1440

Ms. Horwath: Mr. Minister, obviously you haven't even seen the package that was produced and delivered to Queen's Park offices this week by your own minister.

Quite frankly, I've studied the package, and your ministry is in breach of at least three of the standard safeguards in this package against identity theft. Did you prepare a strategy to manage the breach? No. Did you use locks, alarms and video cameras? No. Did you limit access to sensitive data? No, you did not, Minister. Why, then, are you breaching the identity theft protection measures advocated by your own minister and in fact questioned by your own member today in this Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: This honourable member, in her desire to create hysteria and fear, is creating a circumstance where she has removed any of the reality of the situation, which was that somebody broke into a vehicle in the first place—she talks about alarms and security systems and cameras.

Obviously, there are important protocols in place, and we're always working hard to improve those. We brought in the strongest personal protection law in the country, which is a standard that other people are chasing, and we'll continue to work to improve those.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. You recently released our government's draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. In the next 25 years, about 75% of our growth is expected to occur in the GTA and Hamilton. Minister, how will this growth plan be implemented and managed so that sprawl and gridlock is reduced and communities get the infrastructure support they need to grow?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I thank the member very much for the question. We have a situation where we've had a lack of leadership from previous governments that has resulted in gridlock, sprawl, poor air quality and inappropriate land use. In fact, that's exactly why we brought the greenbelt, Places to Grow, source water protection, transportation strategies and a whole host of other measures.

The member asks, what are the necessary infrastructure projects which are going to be put in place to reverse some of the decline we've seen under the previous governments? Quite clearly, our government has taken action where there was none previously: \$1 billion to support the TTC, \$1 billion for GO train enhancement and expansion, \$300 million for the Kitchener LRT, over \$200 million to support the Ottawa train. I want all members to know that there is much more to come. My colleague the Minister of Transportation will be unveiling a strong Greater Toronto Transportation Authority, a GTA-wide transit strategy, and much, much more that I'd be happy—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): And I'm sure that in the supplementary, you'll get there.

Mr. Berardinetti: My supplementary to the minister: You may know that areas in my riding of Scarborough Southwest are earmarked for growth under the city of Toronto's new official plan. In fact, a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to tour the riding with the mayor of

Toronto, David Miller, the city councillor for the area, Gerry Altobello, and my wife, Michelle. We actually spent a good morning together going through the area.

The Warden Woods community is going to see intensified residential development and growth in the coming years. Minister, I'd like to ask you how that intensification will be phased in over a period of years and how my residents will be given greater choices in choosing the type of housing they want in their community.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, that goes right to the heart of the very plan. People across Ontario are telling us that they want greater choices. They want neighbourhoods. They want easy access to community services, schools, work and recreational opportunities. They want to be connected between communities as well.

There's sometimes a misperception that it's either a choice between a 50-foot lot or a 50-storey condominium. We reject that model entirely. There is an entire range of housing choices and affordabilities that we think Ontario consumers ought to have access to. We think there's an entire range of transportation choices, whether it's cars, transit, walking, cycling, skateboarding or whatever. We think that Ontarians deserve those choices, and that is what our plan will deliver for the people of Ontario, through infill and through brownfield redevelopment.

The city of Toronto is already near their target, and they have an outstanding official plan for this.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today I heard from John Buchler from my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. In fact, his wife, Antonia, was here today at the rally, along with Klaus Wand and a whole busload of farmers from my region. John is the first one to say that farmers aren't just interested in handouts, and that's a good thing, because by the time they get through the paperwork for CAIS and for BSE funding, it's really not worth their while. What has him really bugged is the way your government is treating rural Ontario. He would be the first one to tell you that the drinking water regulations and the nutrient management rules are going to shut down small farmers all across the province.

Minister, tell me, tell the small farmers in my riding and Ontario, the ones who were here today on the lawn at Queen's Park: When are you finally going to come up with a regulation that is reasonable, affordable and sustainable?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to be able to stand in the House today and say to the honourable member that we did inherit a lot of problems, and we're here to fix them.

I'm really happy that you talk about the water regulation, particularly regulation 170. I have heard from many of your constituents who were absolutely aghast with the burden that regulation 170 was placing on them, a regulation that was signed by the now leader of the

official opposition. Mr. Runciman was the one who signed that regulation.

We have been working very hard to improve that, I'm happy to report. I was happy to report at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association that we've completed a good deal of consultation. We've gone to 12 communities in Ontario, and we're going to be repairing that very flawed regulation very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member for Waterloo-Wellington.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is to the same minister. Of the many thousands of farmers on the lawn of the Legislature today, hundreds were from Waterloo-Wellington, and I want to thank them for helping us to send a message to the government that rural Ontario will not be ignored and we will stand up for our vital interests.

For three years now, I have been calling upon the provincial government to protect double-hatter firefighters so that our rural communities will be safer as a result of their training, skills and knowledge. Recently, I was pleased to learn that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has added its strong voice in support of the double-hatters' right to volunteer in their home communities. I would ask the Acting Premier, who represents a rural riding in eastern Ontario where this is a huge issue, what is she doing to stand up for the right of double-hatters to volunteer in their home communities and in their own free time?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I guess I'm surprised. Yes, I am a rural member and I am aware of the double-hatter issue in rural Ontario. It was an issue that was raised on the floor of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association convention last week, and I think the minister responsible gave quite an appropriate answer. I'm sure the agriculture community appreciates that the minister responsible, Minister Kwinter, is doing all he can, working in conjunction with the fire marshal's office to ensure that communities across Ontario, including rural communities, continue to be safe.

I just want to remind the honourable member: Maybe he could explain to the OFA and all the folks in rural Ontario why a former minister, himself a rural representative, did not support your private member's bill when he was the minister and you were the government.

1450

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Yesterday the McGuinty government rubber-stamped an outrageous 35% pay increase for the chief executive officer of Hydro One: a \$750,000 base salary, a \$600,000 bonus, \$125,923 in other compensation, a \$2-million severance package should he decide to leave, and you're going to subsidize the mortgage on his home to the tune of \$125,000. Meanwhile, the news wasn't so good for the people of Terrace Bay. Neenah Paper is closing a pulp mill on May 1, and 130 workers will lose their jobs in

Terrace Bay. Why is the mill closing? High production costs—that's code for Dalton McGuinty's 12% increase in the hydro rate for pulp and paper mills. Minister, can you tell the people of Terrace Bay how you justify a 35% pay hike for the chief executive officer at Hydro One at the same time as the McGuinty government kills 130 jobs in that town?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): What I'd like to do with the member is address the situation in Terrace Bay, because it's alarming to me. Obviously I'm saddened when I see announcements such as that, where 130 workers are being displaced. It looks to be about 70 of those workers will be eligible for early retirement. We have talked to the company about ensuring that they receive their maximum benefits and early retirement benefits in order that they can stay in the community.

I've also pledged to work with the company to resolve many of the challenges they have. Fibre supply is obviously a big challenge, and we're working with the company. I gave the company some suggestions in a meeting I had on Monday, when they came up from Atlanta, where I think we could streamline our forestry operations. So I've pledged to work with them so that the viability of machine number 2 will sustain the community.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, it's another 130 jobs that are being killed by your government's policy of increasing hydro rates for industries in northern Ontario. That's on top of the 6,000 jobs that were lost across northern Ontario in the last 12 months under your government, and more mills are threatened with closure because you've got a policy of constantly increasing hydro rates for those mills.

Here's what the people in Terrace Bay see. Your hydro policy is closing their mill. They know that investments need to be made in companies like that. They see that the McGuinty government has a \$500-million investment strategy for the auto sector to sustain jobs. They see that you've got a \$125-million-a-year investment strategy to sustain jobs in the movie and television production in Toronto. They see that you've got an investment strategy of \$400 million for the casino in Windsor to sustain jobs. What they're wondering is, where is the McGuinty government investment strategy for the forest industry, a sector that needs to make investments? Where's the strategy—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: As the member well knows, I brought together the leaders of the industry, the unions, the communities, the First Nations and the environmental community in northern Ontario. They are completing a report, which I will have on my desk by the end of next month. That is where I'm going to get an action plan from the experts. We have also asked experts to be part of that council, to start to give us some direction for increasing the value-added capacity of the industry. This will create jobs in the north.

I would say to the member, he may have missed the announcement of the Minister of Energy of the co-generation facilitator that the government is appointing so that we can work with the industry to start to facilitate co-generation opportunities for industry, to get them basically off the grid and maybe even be a net contributor to the grid. We think there's a lot of potential in northern industry to produce power.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. After more than a decade of neglect, our government has introduced initiatives to ensure that residents in northern Ontario will begin to share in the economic prosperity of our province. Minister, you've played a key role in leading on these initiatives, and certainly the residents of Sault Ste. Marie have seen first-hand your commitment to our city, as well as to other northern communities. Our government has reopened the northern office of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, signalling that the north is once again open for business. Can you tell us about the strategies contained in the northern prosperity plan that will help facilitate growth in northern Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I would like to thank the member and congratulate him for all the hard work that he's doing for his constituents in Sault Ste. Marie.

There's no question but that after years of neglect on the part of the previous government, northern Ontarians really are optimistic about their future. They're optimistic because the McGuinty government is keeping its commitments to northern Ontario. We have kept our commitment to refocus the northern Ontario heritage fund to target job creation in the north. We have kept our commitment to create a northern Ontario grow bonds program. We have kept our commitment to re-establish the northern development councils so that northerners can provide their input—a direct voice to the government—ensuring that the solutions to northern Ontarians' concerns are found and executed by northerners.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education has proposed a new funding model for the transportation of students to school, which will cut the annual transportation grant to the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic school board by 45%;

"Whereas these cuts will force the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board to reduce the existing level of daily bus services for its schools;

"Whereas these cuts will result in increased walking distances for young children and other possible service reductions affecting Catholic schools in Ontario, which could compromise the safety and welfare of these children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Ministry of Education should re-evaluate the proposed new transportation funding model to ensure that the current level of funding for the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board is maintained, so that children attending Catholic schools in the provincial riding of Nepean-Carleton will be able to safely travel back and forth from school."

It will be signed by this member and the member for Timmins-James Bay.

ADVERTISEMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Bell Canada Sympatico issued a paper advertisement to households in Toronto and specifically in the riding of Scarborough Southwest; and

"Whereas the advertisement depicts an anatomy drawing of a female body with some sections cut out; and

"Whereas the text by Bell Canada Sympatico beside this drawing reads, 'You'll do anything to protect your kids from inappropriate content. So will we.'; and

"Whereas this is offensive to females and to the general public, as it is degrading and misleading;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to forward a copy of this advertisement to the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and the Ministry of the Attorney General for review and possible legal action against Bell Canada Sympatico and its agents."

I agree with the petition, and I put my signature to it.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of HRC to extend specialized services, support

and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician's offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment, at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to present this petition, and I affix my signature thereon because I agree with it.

1500

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment against the dedicated TTC right-of-way on St. Clair Avenue West. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the city filed the ESR (the environmental assessment report) and issued the notice of completion on November 22, 2004 ... ;

"Whereas environmental impacts of the dedicated right-of-way significantly affect the quality of life of nearby residents dramatically and detrimentally;

"Whereas the availability of other alternatives to the project have not received careful consideration;

"Whereas the public consultation program and the opportunities for public participation have not been adequate;

"Whereas specific concerns remain unresolved ... ;

"Whereas the city/TTC have not made their case within the parameters set out by the Environmental Assessment Act. The act defines 'environment' to include 'the social, economic and cultural condition that influences the life of humans or a community.' The city has not established the need for the project, nor has it adequately assessed the potential socio-economic impacts that would result from" constructing such a streetcar laneway;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Minister of the Environment issue a part II order which would subject the St. Clair project ... to an individual environmental assessment."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to put my name to it.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

These have been signed today, and I affix my signature.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the

passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by many, many farmers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs of energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I totally agree with it.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to speak on behalf of a number of people in the Niagara region today. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Niagara region has a population of over 430,000 people and has the highest 30-day death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest one-year death rate in Ontario for heart failure, has the second-highest heart failure readmission rates in Ontario, has the third-highest post-heart-attack one-year death rate, and is 25% higher than the Ontario average for ischemic heart disease deaths; and

"Whereas in fiscal year 2002-03, Niagara region residents had 1,230 admissions to hospital for heart failure, 1,150 patients admitted to hospital for acute heart attack, 862 admissions to hospital for ischemic heart disease, 93 admissions to hospital for cardiomyopathy, a repatriation population of 458 post-angioplasty patients, 341 admissions to out-of-region hospitals for coronary artery disease, 328 post-coronary artery bypass patients, 92 heart valve replacement patients and three heart transplant patients; and

"Whereas all of the above-mentioned 4,503 heart patients are eligible for cardiac rehab in Niagara, which

translates to 1,500 new patients who would access Niagara cardiac rehab services every year; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds cardiac rehabilitation in 24 communities but does not fund cardiac rehabilitation services anywhere in Niagara. Heart Niagara, a registered non-profit corporation, provides services in one of the largest cardiac rehab programs in Ontario at no charge to the patient but relies on funding through donations and special events;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Niagara, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That cardiac rehabilitation services in Niagara be funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as they are in 24 other Ontario communities, and made comprehensive and accessible."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition as a supporter, and ask Clemence to carry it down for me.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs of energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I affix my signature to this and present thousands of signatures.

SENIORS' TRANSIT PASS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This is to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors:

"Whereas most seniors live on fixed incomes which are eroding every year due to inflation costs and other necessary expenses;

"Whereas most seniors have their freedom severely restricted when unable to go about their daily business, which includes public transit;

"Whereas most seniors should be encouraged to live active, healthy lives—visiting friends, relatives, going shopping etc.;

"Whereas other jurisdictions already provide free local transit passes to seniors, namely, many cities in the USA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and responsible for seniors, to ensure that seniors be granted a free TTC pass and/or introduce legislation that will force the local Toronto Transit Commission to issue free TTC passes."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

PIT BULLS

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): These are more petitions in addition to the ones I've already received from the National Capital Coalition for People and Dogs, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed;

"Whereas the problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds of dogs;

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty and Attorney General Michael Bryant have failed to allow public consultation on this bill;

"Whereas this legislation is a knee-jerk reaction to a legitimate public concern about all aggressive dogs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario refrain from enacting provincial breed-specific legislation."

I agree with it and will be passing it to my good friend to table in this House.

1510

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community;

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I am pleased to sign this petition, being in full support of it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY**PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005****LOI DE 2005 SUR
LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE**

Mr Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans / *Projet de loi 136, Loi sur l'établissement de zones de croissance planifiée et de plans de croissance.*

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Mr. Caplan.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I will be sharing my time today with my very able and capable parliamentary assistant, Mr. Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland. I rise today to begin second reading debate of Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, legislation that will allow us, for the first time in the history of our province, to make decisions about future growth in ways that strengthen our economy, support strong communities and promote a healthy environment.

As members will recall, the Places to Grow Act is enabling legislation. If passed, it will allow the government to designate specific geographic regions of this province as growth planning areas and to develop growth plans that would guide future developments in those areas. This legislation would encourage land use planning that looks beyond the restrictions of simple municipal boundaries. It would integrate planning across natural and local boundaries and help ensure that growth policies are coordinated amongst all levels of government. By showing where growth should occur, it will help us to develop the public infrastructure needed to support that growth, while at the same time protecting for future generations the green spaces so much a part of the kind of quality of life that we want; and support the agricultural lands that we're going to need to support our population and the natural systems that we desperately need to preserve. Those are the places where growth should not occur. Above all, our growth planning will ensure that there are choices about the future that are guided by a long-term vision about the kinds of communities we want to see.

I can't overstate it: This is truly groundbreaking legislation. Nothing like this has ever been attempted in Ontario before. This represents a radical departure from past practice. Because it is such a sharp change from the way we've done business in the past, I want to discuss the challenges that have led us to take this step and describe the vision for the future that guides us now.

Since about 1980, successive governments at all levels—federal, provincial and municipal—have allowed investments in public infrastructure to fall behind our economic growth and the growth of our population. Governments simply did not put enough money into public infrastructure to keep it in good condition. Now, many of our public facilities are in need of major repair: Roads

and bridges are wearing out; water and waste water systems have broken down; many of our hospitals and schools are overcrowded and out of date; major highways are clogged much of the time; and rush hour in the greater Toronto area alone now lasts some 13 hours of the day. In the greater Golden Horseshoe, our public transportation systems are inadequate and are in desperate need of repair.

There are equally pressing needs in rural Ontario. For example, Renfrew county, the largest county in Ontario, has more than 260 bridges and culverts. A study prepared to help the municipality anticipate future costs estimates that more than a quarter need urgent repairs. More than half will require major work that must be done within the next 10 years.

At the same time, we have not managed the rapid growth of our economy and our population in ways that will enhance our quality of life. Too often, we emphasized short-term benefits and piecemeal planning and ignored the consequences that followed that type of uncoordinated decision-making.

In the most heavily populated parts of the province, we have developed widely dispersed car-dependent communities, a pattern of settlement that damages the environment, threatens the economy and impairs our health and well-being. Numerous studies by the Ontario Medical Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the medical officer of health for Toronto, amongst others, have established important links between the way we design and build our communities and the health of our population. Air pollution generated by daily commutes from these far-flung communities makes many of us sick and injures our health care system. In fact, the Ontario Medical Association estimates some 1,800 premature deaths per year simply because of poor air quality.

In addition, economic damage from congestion caused by this pattern of sprawl amounts to billions of dollars every year—over \$5 billion a year lost to the provincial economy, according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. And if we do nothing, if we continue with business as usual, it's certain that things will get worse.

In the part of Ontario that is growing most quickly, studies by my ministry, verified by outside experts, show that over the next 30 years, greater traffic congestion will increase commuting times some 45% and increase vehicle emissions by 42%. We will build on or pave over almost 250,000 acres of prime farmland, an area twice the size of the present city of Toronto, simply to accommodate the new residents coming into our communities.

Other parts of the province, of course, face different challenges. For them, the issue is perhaps not runaway growth but the absence of growth. We need to attract new people, new development and new investments in every corner of the province of Ontario: in the southwest, in the east, but most especially in northern Ontario. If the legislation we're bringing forward today is passed, it will enable the government to develop growth plans to assist those regions and help them attract the people and job

opportunities that our province so desperately needs. But in both cases, boom or bust, continuing the patterns of the past offers no hope for the future. Business as usual is simply not an option for the McGuinty government.

I've spoken about the need to repair our existing infrastructure and build new facilities to accommodate the growth that we know is coming, that we want to come to the province of Ontario. By our best estimates, we need to invest, at a minimum, some \$100 billion in the public infrastructure over the course of the next 30 years to meet those needs. But there is a further requirement: We cannot be content to merely replicate the past. We must use that investment in infrastructure to help us build the future and create the kind of communities and the kind of society we want for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren.

It is not sufficient to simply throw money at these challenges. Certainly, we have to invest a considerable amount of money, but we also have to be much smarter in the way we go about it. We have to get the best value for our investments by making infrastructure that exists currently work much harder, where we know it can, and by making sure that we build the right things in the right places. We can't afford to re-create some of the boondoggles of the past. But we also need to use our investments in infrastructure to help us achieve the kind of society that Ontarians have said they want. We need to see those investments as instruments of social change that will help us achieve the social goals that Ontarians support and hope for, be it in health, be it in education, be it in social services, be it in the necessary vital services that we all depend upon.

1520

In the next few years, communities across the province will make thousands of decisions about land use planning and development. Those decisions are permanent. Once the land is paved and the houses are built, there is no going back. Our children and many, many future generations will have to live with the consequences. So if this legislation is passed, the growth plans we'll authorize will help and coordinate those decisions in a much more effective manner so that they contribute to a larger vision of the kind of communities that we as a society want, need and can support.

This is a dramatic change. In the past, I would say that there was no coherent vision for the future that we want and simply no plan about how to get there. So in some parts of Ontario, we got sprawl, gridlock, air pollution, inefficient use of infrastructure and lost green space. In others, we got economic stagnation and out-migration of young people to areas that offered greater opportunity. That is not a pattern we are willing to repeat.

This legislation, Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, and the growth plans it would enable will help us to break that vicious cycle. If Bill 136 is passed, it will help us develop more compact, sustainable communities—communities that are less dependent on the car, more respectful of the natural environment and certainly much more enjoyable to live in. It will help us to ensure that we

have the right public infrastructure in the right places to accommodate the larger population that we want to come to Ontario, because, overall, it's about promoting the economic prosperity and competitiveness of our province that this growth will inevitably bring. It would encourage economic development in those parts of the province where growth is desperately needed. We plan to get the right kind of growth in those areas where urban sprawl puts our quality of life at risk.

I want to tell you that I have a real sense of urgency about this legislation. I am increasingly convinced that we now have what may be our last chance to plan for growth, to secure the future that we desperately want and need. We have an opportunity now to reverse some of the negative effects of unplanned growth and sprawling urban expansion and to encourage more balanced development across all parts of the province. If we fail to act now, as previous governments have failed in the past, we will be overtaken by the course of events. Development will move ahead in patterns that preclude effective planning and that are impossible to change after the fact. If we get it right, however, if we make wise decisions about what we build and where and when we build it, many of the other things that we hope to accomplish—source water protection, green spaces, economic development and transit strategies—will fall into place.

More than four million people are coming to Ontario over the next 30 years, whether through natural birth rates or natural migration patterns, and we will create over two million jobs for that population. That's great news. That means vitality and economic prosperity to support a quality of life that will be second to none. These new residents will enhance the quality of life in our communities and contribute to prosperity and our diversity. But we need to plan how we can best accommodate this growth to make sure that people have places to live, places to work, places to play, instead of this constant catching up to it after the fact. We need to plan carefully to ensure that the infrastructure we need is in place while we protect our environmental assets. We can't do that without the kind of planning that this legislation will make possible in law.

Our government was chosen by the people of Ontario to bring about real, positive change to this province. Our plans are visionary in the sense that they envision a better society and a more effective government, but they are also pragmatic, because we have to live in the real world. We expect to have substantial results in real time at the ground level in the communities where we live. If this legislation is passed, the first growth area we will designate will cover the area we call the greater Golden Horseshoe, the fastest-growing region in Ontario; in fact, the fastest-growing in Canada and one of the fastest-growing regions in North America.

We have developed a draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. It is now being circulated to stakeholders and other partners for comment. The draft plan is based upon the discussion document that I had the honour to release this past summer for public comment by Ontarians right across this great region.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of more than 1,600 individuals who attended public information sessions to discuss growth issues and over 500 organizations that made written submissions. I want to say to all of them, to the public, thank you. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and your expertise with us. You have met the first test of citizenship: You are helping to make things better. You are participating in something which is going to create a better future for us all.

We will continue to consult with the people of Ontario, with municipal leaders in the region, with business and industry, with environmental leaders wherever they are, here in Queen's Park and right across this province. If this legislation is passed, we will incorporate the results of this further consultation into our proposals, which will embody our vision for future development here in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

This is a significant departure for Ontario. We have never planned for growth in such comprehensive detail or over so wide an area. In fact, the prevailing theme that we heard in town halls right across this region was that it is long overdue, it is long past the time that the provincial government showed some leadership and worked to get it right. Our planning has never been so firmly based on such sound research and such broad public consultation with the public at large and with expert stakeholders.

For example, we have prepared four technical papers in connection with the draft growth plan. They are all available on the ministry Web site, and we invite public comment. They provide population, economic and household forecasts for growth in the greater Golden Horseshoe, an assessment of the land supply in the area, the ways land use intensification targets could be applied and details about the 25 urban growth centres that we have proposed in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

I urge all members of this House, and the public, to read those studies. They answer many questions about what we propose for the region and why. The growth plan we are developing is based upon the best knowledge we can assemble and the best practices we can observe in other jurisdictions.

I would add that we have received inquiries and interest from urban planners, from the smart growth movement in the United States, from folks literally in jurisdictions worldwide. This is groundbreaking work. It will also be based on expressed wishes and desires, because we believe that there is a lot of wisdom in the communities that make up the region—the local knowledge and expertise of municipal governments and other public agencies.

I'm very proud of this legislation. I'm very proud of the growth plan we will introduce if Bill 136 is passed. But it would never have been possible without the active co-operation and assistance of many people. I would like to particularly acknowledge my colleagues who worked very closely on this piece of legislation. I understand that it was not the normal course of events for governments previously to have ministries work together in an integrated and comprehensive fashion. So I especially want

to thank my colleagues David Ramsay, the Minister of Natural Resources; Steve Peters, the Minister of Agriculture and Food; Leona Dombrowsky, the Minister of the Environment; Harinder Takhar, the Minister of Transportation, as I've already mentioned; and especially John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This plan would not have been possible without their strong support, without the support of their ministries and without a commitment to getting ministry partners to work together, which has not previously existed.

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I want to thank municipal leaders who have worked with us and who have contributed to this legislation and the growth plan. The list is exhaustive, but there are quite a few that I would like to mention, especially Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion; the mayor of Burlington, Rob MacIsaac; the chair of Waterloo region, Ken Seiling; the mayor of Hamilton, Larry Di Ianni; and the mayor of Toronto, David Miller. The list could go on and on. These are some of the leaders who have stepped forward to help the provincial government, the McGuinty government, develop these kinds of plans. I have never seen this kind of co-operation, vigour and synergy of having municipal leaders work with the province, business leaders and environmental leaders to develop a shared vision in the way that we have. The suggestions and recommendations that we received from municipalities have helped this proposed legislation become even better, and I thank them for their contributions. They were invaluable.

We are moving forward with a common purpose, because we know we have a unique opportunity before us. If we act now, if we act together, we can literally change the way we live. For the first time in Ontario's history, we have an opportunity to develop a coherent, comprehensive program to shape the kind of future we want, so that the future is something we build in a conscious, rational way, rather than something that simply happens to us.

I think all members of this assembly would want to see strong, sustainable communities. We all want a healthy environment. We all want a prosperous economy. We all want a high quality of life. Those are the goals that I think each and every member of this assembly can agree upon, and this proposed legislation is the vehicle to help us achieve them.

I thank you very much and look forward to the comments of all members of this assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I have just assumed the chair. Were you splitting the speech?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: With the member for Northumberland.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise today to support second reading of Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act. The proposed Places to Grow Act is the first effort by an Ontario government to seize the opportunities presented by future growth and shape them according to objectives on which we can all agree. Those objectives include safe, healthy and vibrant communities; more

compact and sustainable development, with less dependence on the automobile; first-class public services and infrastructure that support and strengthen new development patterns, instead of merely trying to keep pace with them; and the protection and preservation of the vital heritage resources, green spaces and natural environment that contribute so much to our quality of life.

Our government is working on a number of important fronts, and we're working together in a coordinated way to do it. As you know, we have just passed historic greenbelt legislation in this House to protect valuable farmland and other environmental assets in a broad band that stretches from the Niagara Peninsula to Rice Lake.

We are developing a comprehensive transportation strategy for the GTA, to ensure that our transit systems, roads and highways can accommodate future growth and to make the most efficient use of our existing facilities.

We are also making great strides to strengthen an agri-food sector that contributes \$30 billion to the Ontario economy, employs over 650,000 people and ships \$8.4 billion in exports annually.

Besides providing much-needed financial assistance to farmers dealing with the fallout of BSE and market fluctuations, the government moved forward on innovative projects like encouraging renewable fuel production and establishing a new rural plan.

In my ministry, the Ministry of PIR, we're developing a 30-year public infrastructure strategy to ensure that people have access to vital public services when and where they're needed. Bill 136 demonstrates the kind of provincial leadership that municipalities and other stakeholders have been seeking for many years and that the previous provincial government failed to provide. At this point in Ontario's history, as we begin to plan how we want our province to grow in the 21st century, this leadership is vital.

But with that kind of growth, development is appropriate. It's not appropriate to pave over field after field to put up more houses and shopping malls. This is not necessarily everyone's idea of progress, nor do I believe that it's an efficient or sustainable approach to growth. The basic question before us is whether we want to sit back and watch change and new development simply unfold or whether we want to develop specific plans that will allow us to shape a better and brighter future for our community and province.

I don't think there's any doubt that rational, systematic planning is the way to go. As the members know, development in the past has too often taken place in the absence of coordinated planning on a provincial scale. As a result, our most populous region, the greater Golden Horseshoe, contains many communities that are highly dependent on the automobile. Millions of Ontario commuters pay a price for this kind of urban sprawl. They spend hours and hours on the road. They are overcrowded. They are stuck in traffic when they could be working at their jobs or playing with their kids. Indeed, everyone who lives in Ontario pays a daily price for sprawling development. Today, the hundreds of thou-

sands of automobiles stuck in gridlock are all producing harmful emissions that are extremely damaging to our air and to our health.

Gridlock and congestion also come with a huge economic cost, one that's been estimated at more than \$2 billion a year in lost time and productivity. The proposed Places to Grow Act is our last, best chance to put an end to this kind of unsustainable growth.

Many people and major changes are coming. This is made clear when you see projections stating that more than four million people are coming to Ontario by the year 2031. That's good news. That kind of rapid growth, with all those new people and new jobs, certainly has the potential to strengthen our province, to make it even more successful, prosperous and vibrant. Yet, if we fail now, as other governments have failed in the past, to plan a clear and rational path to the future we want, rapid growth will almost certainly prove harmful to our society and to our quality of life.

In our view, this is a critical time for Ontario. That's why we have introduced legislation that would help us plan the province's future growth in a balanced and rational way. The Places to Grow Act is designed to provide provincial leadership in planning for growth, to help us make better choices for a brighter future. The proposed legislation will allow us to plan effectively to accommodate and expand population and economy.

At the same time, it would ensure that we continue to protect our vital heritage, agriculture and environmental assets.

Under this legislation, the province will have the ability to develop growth plans for different geographic regions of the province. Every plan will be tailor-made for the area that it covers. Growth plans will help us to promote economic prosperity by working out where and how different regions should grow, by looking at the infrastructure they need to support that growth and by assuring that growth does not trample on viable green space, natural systems and farmlands. That is so important to our quality of life.

This is an important point in Ontario's history. We're poised for a sustained period of growth that will change the shape of much of our province in the 21st century. To ensure that those changes are beneficial to our people, we need to be clear about our goals and objectives—about what we want growth to provide and the kind of legacy we want to leave our children. The answer, of course, will be different from one community to another, across the many regions of this province. The key is to come up with the answers that work for each region and community and to plan the outcomes that would ensure strong and prosperous communities.

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Under the provisions of Bill 136, growth plans can include a broad range of information, such as population projections and allocations, which means how many people a region can accommodate and where they can best be accommodated; identification of urban growth centres, which means where and how we can best accom-

moderate growth now, in the near term and in the longer term; and infrastructure development and location to get the most out of our existing infrastructure investments.

If we get these plans right, Ontario's future growth can provide almost limitless possibilities for our people and communities and businesses, and for our children and for their children.

My hope is that within 30 years, people across Ontario will enjoy the benefits of rational, planned growth. I hope they'll live in strong, vibrant communities that are efficient, well serviced and well thought out. I hope they'll have access to good schools, first-class health care facilities, libraries, parks and recreation facilities. I hope they'll enjoy a high degree of mobility, with roads and transit services that serve the population well by allowing them to travel easily and safely. I hope they'll have employment opportunities close to where they live, so they'll have more time to spend with their families and friends and to participate in the life of their community.

The Places to Grow Act, if passed, can help transform these hopes into reality. By enabling us to plan effectively for the remarkable period of growth that we know is coming, this legislation would help ensure that Ontario builds strong, healthy, livable communities and a new era of economic strength and prosperity in the years to come.

As the minister and I travelled across the province just last year and talked to community stakeholders, that's exactly what they asked for over and over again: They needed leadership from this government to help them shape their communities. So I'm delighted to support this piece of legislation, and I encourage everyone in this House to do likewise.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to take part in this debate on the leadoff by the government.

In his very early comments, the minister referred to the bridges of Renfrew county. I don't know how many times we've stood in this House and talked about the need for infrastructure investment in our rural communities. The fact of the matter is that your government has decided to take some of the people's gas tax money—and that means people from all over this province, including Renfrew county—and they're going to use it to pay toward transit systems in the urban areas. I question why you would even use the example of Renfrew county when they're not getting a penny of their gas tax back for their municipal road system, which of course includes the bridges. I'd like to hear a proper explanation of that, because the fact of the matter is that the people in Renfrew county pay a lot of gas tax over the course of a year.

You're clearly stating that you'd like to be a strong partner with the municipal councils; we heard it over and over again at the latest ROMA convention. Municipal councils in my area are saying, "Where's our share of the gas tax money?" If you're taking tax dollars out of people's pockets here in the province of Ontario, we think it should be evenly distributed, based on a per

capita system, throughout the rest of the province, not just in the urban areas. I think the government should explain, in some of the comments today, why a county like Renfrew or Simcoe wouldn't receive funding or assistance toward their bridge projects if the people in all those different communities across the province are paying their gas tax into the provincial coffers for those projects.

That's just one of the concerns I have with this legislation, and I'll have many more opportunities over the next little while to make further comments.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have to say that notwithstanding the effusive, self-congratulatory comments of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, as well as the hopes and dreams of the member from Northumberland, the broad consultation referred to was in fact an embarrassment in my own community.

I was there while people were outraged to see that not only were the maps totally wrong, but that they inappropriately outlined urban boundaries that didn't exist, and designated land as urban that in reality was not urban at all. I would say that people at first were insulted, but then it turned to outrage after a little while. People I talked to, certainly in the aftermath of the initial presentation, were concerned that this was an opportunity for the government to really look at things like sustainable development, social equity and sustainability in this province, and in the Golden Horseshoe in particular, but that instead they called it a growth plan when it could have been called something that more reflected the desires of the people in my community who came out to the consultations.

Nonetheless, as you are very famous for saying and are very happy to hear these phrases, it is, "Build it and they will come." That is certainly what's going to happen in the Golden Horseshoe area. What's happening is that, with the plans for highways to cut through all of these areas, we know very well that all this really amounts to is a way to encourage leapfrog development and more urban boundary expansion, something that is not what we would like to see in regard to a positive and sustainable way of growing this province. Unfortunately, what we have is a bunch of developers that belly up to fundraisers put on by the finance minister and attended by the Premier, where people can get the ear of the government members that they're going to bend. Then, lo and behold, we have this legislation that's going to go nowhere.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to stand today in support of the proposed legislation. I come from a community that is at the height of its growth. It's facing all the growth pressures we've talked about over the past few years. The people of my community understand the need for that growth, but what they have never understood is why a provincial government in the past had never allowed a plan to be put in place that sensibly allowed for infrastructure, transit, highway infrastructure and for things like libraries and arenas and green space preservation.

Municipal officials I talked to, both staff and elected, are very pleased with the intent of this bill. In Oakville,

this Liberal government preserved and saved from development almost 1,300 acres. The previous government was prepared to sell and pave much of that green space. That's forward thinking and forward planning, in my opinion.

I think the Places to Grow document is one we should be extremely proud of, where a community that wants to grow—we know we're in one of the fastest-growing areas on this continent. We've got a strong and robust economy, and we know that growth is an important part of that economic growth. For my riding of Oakville, this means that after years of simple sprawl, a government finally understands what it takes to control that sprawl, what it means to grow in an orderly way.

I'd like to thank Minister Caplan, Minister Ramsay and Minister Gerretsen for the type of legislation they've been bringing forward, which really understands, appreciates and respects the type of environment that people in an urban setting in Ontario feel they have the right to live in today. I'm extremely proud of this document.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I appreciate the minister's comments and those of his parliamentary assistant, and I look forward to providing more thoughts on behalf of the official opposition momentarily. I'll wear my MPP hat for the good people of Erie-Lincoln first, before I get to the critic's role.

There are a few issues that the minister and I have talked about, and I appreciate that he has lent his ear to these concerns. It's important to get them on the public record. In terms of the urban growth centres, I'm pleased to see that St. Catharines is cited as one. Fort Erie and Niagara Falls on the border area have tremendous capacity. The minister references that in his draft plan that is out to date.

They used to have those special little red-coloured dots, and now they've shifted to a border area that is not as clearly defined. I hope that will still be a target for investment for this government, because the minister knows that if he can't get goods across the border and to market efficiently, or tourists coming into our province efficiently and safely, that's a tremendous loss to the economy. So I do hope, when they're making future infrastructure investments, that the Fort Erie to Niagara Falls corridor and the importance of the border links will continue to have the strong emphasis that was part of the original plan, but which I'm worried may have slipped off the radar screen.

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On behalf of folks in southern Niagara—my colleague from Niagara Centre will probably speak to this as well—there is tremendous growth potential in the Welland to Port Colborne corridor with the expansion of Highway 406. We would like to see that four-laning extended through Welland and then down to Port Colborne.

I think, for the purposes that the government emphasizes as well the use of brownfields along the canal, the significant compact development that occurred, the use of the canal for transportation that is now in a brownfield status—for future targeted investments in brownfields,

Welland and Port Colborne would make tremendous future growth areas. We have the transportation network there, hopefully with the 406, but also through brown-field redevelopment.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Public Infrastructure has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Two minutes is not nearly enough to reply to the comments, but I want to thank all my colleagues and the member from Northumberland as well for his comments.

The member from Erie-Lincoln quite rightly stresses the need for us to maximize the border points, the key economic points for our province. In fact, that's the foundation on which the growth plan in the greater Golden Horseshoe is built, and yes, we see a very bright future for Fort Erie and Niagara. I look forward to having that conversation about some of the thinking that is going on, some of the investments and some of the support that we see, to help support not only the population but the job growth and the employment growth that we see down in the Niagara area. I look forward to working with the member.

I know that we all, as members of this Assembly, have an interest in seeing our communities be successful. To the member from Oakville: Yes, in fact I did omit Mayor Mulvale, who has been a very strong proponent and partner. I want to say that the member himself, in the protection of ecologically sensitive lands in north Oakville—a tremendous job there.

To the member from Hamilton East I must admit some disappointment, because our town hall in Hamilton attracted some 500 Hamiltonians. The report in the Hamilton Spectator the next day in fact did not characterize it as the member from Hamilton East talked about, but was quite glowing about the fact that a minister and a government have never taken such pains to listen to the people in Hamilton, to work to support the future economic well-being of the region. I know we're being guided by the people of Hamilton.

Lastly, to the member from Simcoe North, on the gas tax, I want to reply that yes, we see transit as an important investment. The downloading of roads and bridges by the previous government has caused enormous problems in rural Ontario, and that's why we've established COMRIF, the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, specifically to meet some of those challenges.

The Acting Speaker: Further discussion?

Mr. Hudak: To give notice ahead, I plan on sharing my time with my good, hard-working colleagues from York North and Simcoe North as well.

It is a great pleasure to rise on Bill 136, to comment not only on the legislation but on the associated plan that goes with it, and on the government's general approach on this sort of growth planning agenda and investment in infrastructure.

First, the tone has come down considerably in this chamber from question period. The atmosphere is a bit cooler than I remember from just an hour ago.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Do you feel the love?

Mr. Hudak: Maybe along that theme, I say to my colleagues, I will offer compliments to the minister on the way he has brought forward this legislation, and to the new Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The Minister of Natural Resources has asked what's wrong. Well, leopards cannot change their spots, I suppose. But I think the minister has been careful in his thinking about the growth plan in this legislation. He's put forward a number of consultation documents that will probably be discussed here today and throughout the debate. I do believe that in many ways what he's brought forward resembles a lot of things we were doing under the Smart Growth initiative, as many of the principles are the same. It would be a different title. There might be a red cover on the document as opposed to the good old-fashioned blue colour, which, as you can tell by my clothes today, is the one I usually prefer. But I want to compliment the minister on that. If they erred on one side of caution, it's on the consultative side. There has been a sense of consultation on the papers it has brought forward as well.

There are elements of the bill, which we will address, that are not to the same extent worrisome, troublesome, as other pieces of legislation under the Dalton-knows-best mandate. We do have a concern, as we've said in this chamber, about successive pieces of legislation that have taken more and more power into the central government. I wouldn't take as much offence at that as I would with some of your colleagues' bills; Bill 25, Bill 26 and Bill 135, to name a few.

While I'm complimenting the minister, at the same time I have to put it in perspective. This is, I think, a welcome contrast to the way that the greenbelt legislation, Bill 135, was brought forward. The minister has now stopped nodding at my comments, I note. Before I had him, and now I guess there's a point of disagreement.

Bill 135, for those who are watching at home or reading Hansard, is the greenbelt legislation. We will argue, and I think we've argued quite successfully, that the boundaries were done behind closed doors, that the decisions were made on a political basis as opposed to being based on environmental science. It was very suiting that the announcement of the final map on Monday was at the McMichael art gallery, because it showed that this is more about the art of politics than it is about science. Their own group of seven ministers was there in attendance, complete with staff for that announcement. If the greenbelt legislation had followed a similar process in terms of getting the municipalities' information to the table first and foremost, as opposed to drawing the maps and then reacting and trying to change the maps at the last minute, you may have had a different outcome.

Secondly, what this does as a growth plan is much more comprehensive in its nature. It looks at transportation infrastructure and water and sewer infrastructure. It looks at a number of tools, and your consultation papers

are necessary to make it successful, whereas Bill 135 was strictly about boundaries where growth could not take place without an associated plan for agriculture and an associated infrastructure strategy, for example, or assistance for municipalities.

I have said this before in the House, and I'll say it again today: I think it would have been preferable if the entire strategy—the greenbelt, the growth plan and what I'll get to, the GTTA stuff—were under one ministry. The minister can't comment on that. I'm sure these discussions have taken place. It would have been a much more comprehensive and timely approach and easier for people who care about the legislation to respond to one stream of work as opposed to two or three separate streams. I think you could have looked, in a more comprehensive manner, at where growth is to take place and at the same time, where growth shall not take place.

I would argue that the Smart Growth panels were set up to achieve just that, sitting down at the round tables and the sessions with municipal leaders, many of which the minister mentioned earlier on, that he thanked, and we thanked them for their work on Smart Growth as well. Those panels—municipal leaders, environmentalists, the building community—were to develop those comprehensive regional plans, not just for the greater Golden Horseshoe but for the province as a whole, so you could look at where growth should not go—the environmentally sensitive areas—where growth should go, and how to foster good transportation routes and good infrastructure policies to make that kind of Smart Growth planning successful.

So I am giving accolades where they're due, to this minister for the initiative to date. We will have some concerns expressed here in the House for improvements in the bill, but we're much happier with the process of how we got here than with Bill 135, which we will give a failing grade to. We are not at all happy with and voted against that legislation, and wish a better approach had been used. We're going to keep an eye on it—you've heard in question period today about fundraisers and how those may impact boundary decisions.

We cannot grade the Minister of Transportation quite yet on the transportation decisions: the GTTA, the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority. We read with some interest on this side of the House the Toronto Star article of a couple of days ago where the minister said that plan was imminent. The definition of imminent seems to have changed from the last time, because there was talk that this was going to happen last fall or last winter, that that authority would come forward, but now we're promised a much grander vision, and it's imminent, "So just you wait, and it'll eventually be here."

1600

The problem is, you eventually run out of time. You can't build a highway in a day.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Twenty years?

Mr. Hudak: With the mid-peninsula corridor, some would say, there's a pool. We'll have a pool in our office

over when the mid-peninsular corridor will be open and we can drive that first car down that new highway. I've got 2031 right now, actually, as my date.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The minister says, "Hopefully not." But if you want into the pool, we'll see what the minister selects.

The point is that the transportation network that is going to facilitate travel for goods, for services, for individuals to and from work and to and from home is still missing, after almost a year and a half of this government. If there are going to be any major projects, I think that means the door's pretty well closed to driving on any new roads or going down the rails of any new transit systems in the lifetime of this current assembly, by the fall of 2007.

So a complaint we will have from this side of the House is, I think, a very valid one. I hate to do it—it pains me to do so—but to quote Walter Mondale, "Where's the beef?" Where will these projects actually go? You do need to make investment decisions. You need to make partnerships, through P3s or whatever mechanisms they use, to begin to invest in transportation infrastructure. It has been a year and a half already, so if there is a bit of gridlock internally on decision-making, that's going to exacerbate the gridlock that exists today. Those individuals taking the QEW from Niagara to the Toronto area, those coming south down the 400 or east or west on the 401, or those waiting for the subway—I fear those lineups are going to get even longer. They'll have to set their alarm clocks even earlier, because if no decisions have been made after a year and a half of the government's mandate, it's going to be a heck of a long time before those roads or transit systems are built.

I look forward to Minister Takhar's GTTA, but I look forward to it with some degree of pessimism because a great deal of time has passed already, and I've not been impressed by the conduct in that ministry. I can't even think of a single highway project that has come forward in the lifetime of this government.

While we're being complimentary, giving some kind words to the minister and the conduct of this ministry—and I do appreciate his staff giving the opposition briefings on this legislation and the plan—we cannot also forget the work of previous ministers like Chris Hodgson and David Young, who followed on Chris's path.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Chris, yes; David, no.

Mr. Hudak: OK. And certainly David Lindsay, who served as the equivalent of deputy minister at Super-Build, did a lot of work in bringing this forward. I've got a great deal of regard for their work. Probably, if we were being honest, off the record of Hansard, there should be some recognition even from government members that a lot of what they've brought forward to date in their growth planning stems from that earlier process begun by those ministers.

Let me give you an example of some of the Smart Growth principles that began under Premier Mike Harris in January 2001:

"Use existing infrastructure and resources to increase the capacity for economic growth; invest wisely in new infrastructure." That gets a check mark.

"Manage growth by making tough choices about where development should go." Part of this approach is to determine various urban areas for future growth and to set goals of 40% intensification.

"Expand transportation choices within and between communities." I guess more of that will come from transportation—hopefully soon.

"Protect natural areas and farmland for future generations." Obviously, I would have preferred if the greenbelt approach were based on environmental science as opposed to political science, but the goals would be similar to those of Smart Growth.

"Encourage growth in areas where it will have the least impact on the environment"—follows up.

The principles about which the government speaks on these growth planning initiatives follow on the work that Premier Mike Harris started and that Chris Hodgson, David Young and David Lindsay continued under the Smart Growth panels. There are some differences. Our Smart Growth plans were made by local decision-makers and not centrally at Queen's Park. Both aspects play a role, but I would argue that there was a greater deal of a consultative process used in Smart Growth than has been evidenced by the government's initiatives under Premier McGuinty.

Our Smart Growth covered the entire province. I guess they will get to that point under Bill 136, but to date it has been centred on the greater Golden Horseshoe—a very important area, obviously, to address initially, but we do hope we'll understand the time frame and the approach for other areas of the province as well.

Very importantly, and I said this to the minister earlier on, it's one thing to have a plan, but you've got to have some bucks behind it. You could have the buns, but you have to put some beef in the sandwich, to paraphrase our old friend Walter Mondale. Our Smart Growth plans were backed up with financial commitments on infrastructure through a \$1.25-billion GTIP, which is the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships. So there is the money to go with the plan.

I know the ministry is working hard at getting those funds secured, but we have yet to see any evidence of that. A major transit project has not been announced to my knowledge, and certainly no major highway projects to go with it.

The leapfrog effect: I know the Speaker, when he is over here, has spoken about it, and my colleagues here and in the NDP and, I would expect, on the government side. The leapfrogging impact would have been addressed through the Smart Growth because of the associated investments in transit and transportation. Those highways, extensions of GO etc. would be made in conjunction with the plan. But so far we've seen the plan, without the funding to go with it. Maybe when the budget comes forward in April, it will contain some of those investments. As I said, we're approaching the halfway

point of a government that is rapidly running out of time to make the decisions that are necessary to support the Smart Growth initiatives. On leapfrogging, I hope we'll hear more from the government members. It's something that definitely needs to be addressed with actual plans for investment in infrastructure.

I hope to have some more insight into the intensification targets by the end of this debate as well. The government has set an intensification target of some 40%. I know that they hired Urban Strategies, I think to give advice on those intensification targets. They looked at other jurisdictions, including European countries. They looked at British Columbia, which I imagine is Vancouver, and they said that they had achieved 80%. They're different scenarios. European cities are old, many of them constructed before cars were commonly owned by average families in the province of Ontario, so they certainly would have developed within walking distance or a horse ride or a trolley or what have you. Vancouver really, physically, is a bit of an island. It's a bit of an island bounded by the ocean and the mountains and such, so Vancouver would naturally have to get some pretty high intensification targets.

I guess they decided we could meet them halfway. If 80% was the standard in some other countries or in Vancouver, we could get to 40%, but I hope to understand that there is more science behind that 40% target than simply a halfway point to 80%.

If the government truly wanted to support municipalities getting to 40% intensification, I would have guessed they would bring some tools to go along with that, some assistance for those municipalities to invest in core infrastructure, some financial tools to ensure that brownfields can be redeveloped in the urban cores. If we do see those measures come forward in the budget, then I'll have more faith that they're serious about hitting the 40% intensification targets. But if we don't see those investments, I am going to be very pessimistic that we'll be able to achieve that 40%.

There has been confusion, too, when they talk about the intensification targets, and the example was given of the Yonge and Eglinton area in Toronto. Anybody who knows that area of Toronto knows what it looks like. It's a pretty intensely developed area, with commercial and residential properties. Now, how you transpose that on Milton—or my colleague spoke about Oakville—will be interesting to determine. Maybe it's just misunderstood as to what that target will look like, but it's hard right now for us to visualize how you can transpose Yonge and Eglinton on to those communities, or St. Catharines or Niagara Falls, for example.

I said that I would share my time, so I'll try to skip through a few of the other documents I wanted to speak of. As I said, the minister has brought forward a number of discussion papers—the urban growth centres in the greater Golden Horseshoe that had those 25 targets. There is some concern that there are areas that would like to host future growth that may have been left out of the initial list of 25. I think that we need some clarification, as well. If you're not on that list of 25, does that mean

that you'll be limited in your future growth? That may be; maybe not. We don't know. But say, for example, Port Colborne, in my riding, which I think has enormous potential, is not one of the 25.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It'll grow.

Mr. Hudak: The whip says it will grow, and so he has the same faith as I do in the people of that community and the businesses that are there, which I appreciate. But if there's an infrastructure program that comes down the line to support Places to Grow, as we are calling for today, just like we had the GTIP projects to support growth and intensification, the expansion of highways and transit, will Port Colborne, because it's not one of the stars on the map, be out of luck in accessing that type of pop? So we need to understand better if there will be a pool that will discriminate among the urban growth centres, as opposed to those that aren't starred, and if that is the case, if that's the direction the government is going, what happens to a Port Colborne or a Welland, for example, that is not on the list as it exists today? As I mentioned, I think there's enormous potential down the centre and into southern Niagara because of brownfield redevelopment and existing services. Cities that have actually shrunk over time, if the investments are done properly, will have a chance to rebound.

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The minister also undertook The Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, with forecasts for employment, population and households for 2031. Of course, A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Area was the third document. I mentioned the one by Urban Strategies about the intensification targets. What's curious, actually—I think I might have caught the government out on this one—is that the government will argue that Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation, was based on science. They say that land decisions about what was frozen were based on population projections and what the land supply is currently. But they either knew what the studies were going to say or we caught them in something that may not actually be accurate. These reports the minister brought out about population and land supply actually came out after the greenbelt map was set, which gets to our point on the other bill, Bill 135: I don't think it was based on science, because when they make their arguments in the House or in committee, they say it's based on plan A, plan B and plan C, or study A, study B and study C, but study A, study B and study C came out after the map was set. So it's a remarkable change in the time stream that would make a Star Trek fan confused. So maybe it was more so—

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: My colleagues are skeptical, a bit more cynical. I don't know if it's this current bunch, but there seems to be cynicism on this side of the House that maybe they were decided more at fundraisers than as a result of the minister's studies.

Let me give some more specifics. Section 3, as I said, talks basically about how Bill 136 allows the minister to

make growth plans and about the consultation with municipalities in that process, what happens in the event of a dispute, for example. Section 3 really gives the enabling power to the minister to make these growth plans for public infrastructure renewal. As I said, we do have the greater Golden Horseshoe, which I think most people would objectively argue would be the prime area to focus on first. I think what will be important for us colleagues who come from London, Ottawa and other parts of the province is some understanding of the time frame for growth plans for those areas as well. The minister talked about a sense of urgency in moving forward with this, that the decisions should have been made earlier. Well, time continues to pass in London, Ottawa, Sudbury or Thunder Bay and such, so some indication from the government as to when the growth plans for those areas will be coming forward and when municipalities can begin to do their homework would be entirely helpful today.

Section 5 of the act gives the minister the ability to create an advisory council, and the word is currently "may." We had the same thing in Bill 135, that the minister "may" create a Greenbelt Advisory Council. We heard across the committee hearings, across the greenbelt area, that as a bare minimum it must be a committee created to advise the minister, so change "may" to "shall." In fact, there were suggestions that there could be unique committees for the tender fruit area in Niagara or the Holland Marsh. Those amendments were shot down in committee, but at least the amendment that was brought forward by ourselves and the third party, and the government members as well, made sure that the committee was mandated, that it did happen. I hope similarly, with respect to Bill 136, they will mandate that advisory council instead of making it optional for the minister.

Section 7 is a notice requirement—I wanted to highlight that in addition to sections 3 and 5—which is a good thing. It requires the minister to give notice to municipalities when they're considering a growth plan for the area. I know that if this minister had done the greenbelt legislation, there would have been notice provisions in Bill 135. If the minister's bill gives notice but Bill 135 did not give notice, it was a major oversight that we hope to correct through Bill 135.

I am glad it's here. I think it's appropriate. It's a given that if you're going to create a growth plan down the road for Ottawa, for eastern Ontario, you would notify the municipalities that you are doing this growth plan, and they could respond accordingly and begin planning and working with the ministry.

I'll ask my colleagues if they'd care to respond. Was there notice given to the municipalities in the greenbelt?

Mr. Dunlop: No.

Mr. Hudak: The answer is no—no notice to municipalities or landowners in the greenbelt, which impacts those municipalities dramatically. So while I'm happy it's here, I wish it were in 135. I don't know if it's too late, if there's some procedure. You're the deputy House leader as well. Maybe we could insert it into Bill 135 additionally, but I think it is too late.

I also wanted to highlight sections 12 and 13 of the act. The minister is nodding; he's heard about this. A number of groups such as AMO are concerned about this area. This part of the act requires the municipalities' official plans to conform to the growth plan. I believe the approach the government has taken here is that they conform in the next cycle of their official plans. There will be some who will argue that might take too long, that if you want to make the investments today, that time frame may be too long. On the other hand, others will argue that if you're putting a new burden on municipalities that's in addition to other pieces of legislation—burdens like Bills 135, 25 and 26, source water protection, nutrient management, all these other burdens that are coming forward on the municipal sector—perhaps it's appropriate to give them time or support, because you can't do the updates of the official plans cost-free. Right?

It does give the minister the power to unilaterally change an official plan as well in the event of non-compliance.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Only if the Minister of Municipal Affairs concurs.

Mr. Hudak: OK. He says, "Only if the Minister of Municipal Affairs concurs."

Hon. Mr. Caplan: So it's a check and balance.

Mr. Hudak: I don't know how much check and balance there is, though. Your colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn't even have consultations as part of his bill, Bill 135, so I'm not clear how he'll respond to this. But there is the ability of the minister to impose the changes on the OP, and I think there will be some concern about that—and about the qualifications of the hearing officers—associated with sections 12 and 13 of the bill.

I'll highlight those, and then my colleagues will have more to say about particular aspects of the bill. I look forward to debate on this. I don't know if this is going to committee. We certainly hope it goes to committee and we'll hear what other groups have to say.

I know AMO responded in February about these parts of the act, among others. I'll give you a couple of the highlights there. AMO says some municipalities that are currently designated for growth may not be willing recipients of the growth, and there may be other municipalities that are willing recipients that aren't scheduled for growth. So rectifying those types of decisions will be an important part of this process.

AMO makes a salient point, too. There are a number of initiatives—this isn't the only one. There are a number of initiatives, some very egregious in their imposition of power upon municipalities and taking those powers behind the closed doors of the minister's office. The municipalities make the point that rather than having municipalities and the public negotiate with various ministries, the government should designate a lead ministry on these issues. I think that's a very important point.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, whether it's this ministry or another, I think it's certainly valid, but as I suggested, I

would have hoped at the outset, if I go back in time to October 2003, they would have taken a different approach and tried to consolidate all of these initiatives—the greenbelt, the growth plan, the transportation plan, and an investment pool to back it up—which would have been a much more sensible approach, instead of dividing it up among three different ministries. AMO has more to say, and we'll probably get to that a bit later on.

One thing I hope I'll hear from the government members is a recognition of the achievements and the work under Premier Harris and Ministers Hodgson and Young on the Smart Growth initiative. The notes are prepared by staff and sometimes get read by the members. You often hear, "The previous government did nothing. The previous government let this happen." Well, it's not true. In fact, if we do have a problem with rapid growth, it's a problem that other jurisdictions probably envy, that we in fact had that growth. I stand proudly on our record, as a Progressive Conservative under Mike Harris, that saw the biggest expansion of jobs I think in the history of this country, with about 1.25 million more jobs created. Ontario was restored once again as the engine of growth for our country, envied not only in Canada but across North America.

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We're home to many new people moving into the province, moving into homes, who go to the greater Golden Horseshoe area, or immigrants from abroad, not by coincidence but because we laid the foundation for strong growth and a strong economy by lowering taxes and investing in infrastructure. Certainly SuperBuild and its associated funds were making significant and, in areas, record investments in infrastructure. I was pleased to be the minister responsible for the sports, culture and tourism partnership that made investments in those areas. The millennium fund invested in the larger urban centres for initiatives and to support Smart Growth.

When I hear the members opposite say the previous government did nothing, I find it highly regrettable because it doesn't meet with the facts, but it's also very superficial.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): No government ever did anything—

Mr. Hudak: I guess no government ever—

Mr. Dunlop: This is the first government to ever do anything and they've really made the farmers mad.

Mr. Hudak: You can see there is some frustration on this side of the floor about not recognizing the work of the previous government. I hope I hear part of that because I am pleased with the boom that was created under the economic policies of the Mike Harris government. That was supported by infrastructure investments and the Smart Growth initiative, which was a leader in Canada. I hope I hear an honest reflection of that from across the floor.

Can you always plan better? Any government could always plan better. I salute the minister for trying to develop a 30-year plan. We need investments in the meantime. I don't want to wait 30 years for that mid-

peninsula corridor, for example, but I do think we need to recognize the outstanding work and leadership under Premier Harris and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in this realm.

I spoke a bit about the GTTA and the importance of moving that forward. We have not seen a single noteworthy project to support this initiative out of transportation. The minister brings forward bills about helmets and safety seats and things like that, but I would like to see greater concentration and emphasis on breaking the gridlock. That long snake of traffic that working families deal with on a daily basis is getting longer every day. None of this planning—this 30-year plan or five-year plan, the growth plan, no plan to make plans—is going to work without a significant investment in breaking gridlock, investments in transit, as we did with the Sheppard subway extension, for example. Moving GO to Barrie, Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, I think are some of the areas we were highlighting as a government, and moving it into Niagara as well will go a long way. Major highway projects to ensure Ontario stays as the economic engine, so goods can get to market efficiently and safely, and so people can move and visit families, or tourists can come to this province and enjoy their stay and not get stuck in gridlock, are absolutely vital.

Some of the projects I spoke about: the mid-peninsula corridor, which has been sadly thrown into reverse; part of our transportation strategy, extending Highway 404 past Lake Simcoe, including the Bradford bypass; completing Highway 407 through Durham to Highways 35 and 115; widening Highway 401; making safety investments in southwestern and eastern Ontario; sending 427 up to Barrie and Highway 410 to at least Highway 89.

I know that tremendous work has been done on Highways 11 and 69 into northern Ontario. There were record investments under the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments into those two areas. I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines will continue to press that at the cabinet table, as he is on Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury. In fact, the minister cares so much, I think he's probably out there every weekend with his shovel and asphalt building that 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Come with me on a Saturday.

Mr. Hudak: Come and help out. I want to do a mid-peninsula corridor first. Not to always talk about my own backyard, but I'll do a mid-pen and then we can help you out on a Saturday north of Parry Sound.

Anyway, among others, including investments in northwestern Ontario, 11 and 17, a comprehensive plan.

No matter how well you plan this, how pretty a document it is, how many nice colours you have for various dots, none of it is successful without a major investment in breaking gridlock. It is well past the time to make those types of investments. Every day of delay causes people's alarm clocks to be put earlier and earlier in the morning and people then coming home later and later at night to visit with their children or their husband or wife.

The last point I'd make is with respect to the environmental assessment process. Quite frankly, you could probably spend every dollar from the gas tax on the EA process. They're long, expensive processes. I know the Minister of the Environment is investigating this area. We hope that as an associated program the EA process will be streamlined to make sure you cover the bases, make sure you do good environmental work, but at the same time reduce red tape and streamline the process so that you can actually begin to move ahead on major transportation and transit initiatives and investments in water and sewer projects. If something as relatively straightforward as a new streetcar line down St. Clair here in the city of Toronto is going to take several years, imagine how long expansions of Highway 410, Highway 427 or the mid-peninsula corridor could take. So we hope to see that come forward.

Lastly, you're going to have to put—I know my colleague from Brant cares about this—brownfields and repatriate brownfields back into production.

Mr. Levac: It's coming.

Mr. Hudak: He says it's coming. That's a major part of this initiative as well, but you really need the tools to make it successful. You need the legislative and regulatory tools to do so, as well as tax incentives and investments on behalf of the taxpayer. A number of tools are out there. We can talk about that later on, but you need that toolbox, so to speak, full of tools to make sure you can actually do some brownfield redevelopments.

My last point—I've gone on a bit longer than I had planned to, Mr. Speaker. I see the Speaker respond with great excitement to the opening phrase of my last point.

The government has a strong predisposition against the automobile. I understand they have important initiatives to make sure we reduce emissions and smog, which we support. We brought forward our own initiatives, like Drive Clean, in that regard. But I think there is a reality that a lot of people like to drive the car and a good number of people, with all the intents and purposes of the government to put us all into condos and apartment buildings in urban cores, will still want to have their own backyard and play catch with their son or daughter, have their own garden and their own living space. I think it's part of Canadian culture to own your own home. Many will like the privacy of driving their own car to or from work or carpooling with a friend or what have you, but will prefer to drive or take transit and live outside of urban cores for a number of reasons.

There's this notion that urban sprawl is causing us all to become much fatter. I think that caloric intake, for example, might be another cause of that. Who knows? But I think it is part of our culture that people like to own their own homes, especially young families, and will find the automobile actually empowering. There's an anti-automobile message that comes through quite a bit from the government's pronouncements.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: It's true; you don't like cars. You might because you're in Brant. But listen, this is what they

talked about: the automobile and highways. I fear that you are actually restricting roadways and transportation development seriously because you're an anti-car. You have to expand the highways. Transit investments: absolutely, we need to do more of that, but to relieve gridlock for those who choose to drive, you need those investments in the highways as well, which has been absent from your agenda.

Mr. Levac: The 424.

Mr. Hudak: I hope we will see some of those investments. I just have not seen those to date.

The point I'm trying to make is that gridlock will continue. No matter what the intentions are, no matter what the intensification standards of 40% are set by the government, you'll still have people who will prefer to commute, have some of their own space, live in their own homes. To address that, you need to make the investments in transit and transportation to get them to and from work quickly and to and from their families quickly. I worry that this will be left out of the plan altogether, with some goal of putting everybody in apartment buildings or condos. Maybe I'm wrong, but I've not seen the evidence to date of any coherent plan to break gridlock.

Certainly I expect that the greenbelt plan will see a big leapfrogging impact into the Simcoes, for example, maybe as far as the Oxford counties. Who knows, I say to my colleague sitting beside me. But I know the leapfrog impact over the greenbelt is going to cause increasing problems without proper investments in transit and transportation.

That's an overview of the concerns I have as the critic for public infrastructure renewal. I know that my hard-working colleagues from York North and Simcoe North have their own strong thoughts on this and how it impacts on their ridings, and I look forward to their debate as well as the others in the chamber.

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The Acting Speaker: Further speakers?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm very pleased to be able to rise and make a few comments on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans.

It's funny that we'd be talking about a growth plan and growth on a day when thousands of farmers and a lot of our rural stakeholders visited Queen's Park. I don't think anybody has to question how we feel the government treats the citizens of rural Ontario.

I made my earlier comments about the roads and bridges that we mentioned in Renfrew county and the gas tax and why I thought it was so very, very unfairly distributed, when in fact all people pay into that particular program.

There are a couple of clarifications that I would like to get my head around. The \$100 billion over 30 years—and I hope the minister or someone in the government caucus can clarify this for me—is that 100 billion provincial dollars, or is that \$33 billion spent by the provincial government, \$33 billion by the federal government, and \$33 billion by the municipalities? Are we talking

about \$100 billion or \$300 billion? I think that's very important, because I think it's going to be a lot closer to \$300 billion than \$100 billion. In 30 years' time, I can tell you that a lot of the capital projects we have today will not be built for the same type of dollars. I know the hospital that is under construction right now in Orillia started out 20 years ago with a proposed plan of \$10 million, and the contract signed in 2003 was for \$82.5 million. You can see that the cost escalates. So we need to know the government's plan. The minister keeps bragging about this \$100 billion, but I'd really like to know if he's really talking about \$300 billion.

Another concern that I have is the way the government treats some of the municipalities. We keep talking about partnerships and this new commitment to municipalities and all these sorts of phrases that the government continually uses in this Legislature.

I can tell you that we have a growth area in the county of Simcoe. The city of Barrie, of course, is one of the major growth areas in the province and has been for some time. I think the county of Simcoe and the city of Barrie have done a fairly remarkable job in how we've controlled growth and allowed growth to take place in that part of the province. There's also a great deal of concern about our environment in that area.

But we got a real surprise just last fall, only a few days before this bill was brought out. A company called UCCI Consolidated had applied to the township of Oro-Medonte, which is just north of the city of Barrie, in the little community called Shanty Bay, and they applied to the county of Simcoe, to amend their official plan for an adult lifestyle community. The township was in full approval. This is a township that I can tell you is not flamboyant in any way whatsoever. They plan very carefully, particularly around their water source protection and around the huge Oro moraine that is in that area. In fact, that's a priority of the township of Oro-Medonte and Mayor Neil Craig.

The county approved the amendment and the township approved the amendment. We thought it would just be natural that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs would go along with this official plan amendment, because these are communities that are very well organized and that plan very carefully. But, no, it was turned down. It has become a great disappointment to the township and to the county that this great partner they had, the province of Ontario, would turn down an adult lifestyle project that was going to take place in Shanty Bay. We think there was some political pressure put on at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs; I'm quite sure there was. They caved in. So this partnership that the township of Oro-Medonte and the county of Simcoe had with the government doesn't exist any more, as far as I'm concerned, because this was something that was very well—it needed, and it had, a great deal of support from the whole community. Literally, I've got petitions with thousands of names, asking the government to reconsider that.

I guess if that's the question—we keep talking about the ministry's plan for a healthy environment. We know

that they're going to ban all coal-fired generation by 2007. I can tell you, that's not going to happen. We know that's not going to happen. Why anybody would make an idiotic promise like that, who would ever know? But it will not happen, and that's why we've got all these crazy announcements happening right now—except for the fact that we know the government will make a big splash this spring when, apparently, the Lakeshore generating station closes, a plan that Elizabeth Witmer put in place, and when Dwight Duncan tries to take credit for the final closing of that plant.

But I'm concerned about this so-called healthy environment legislation that the minister kept referring to and how it impacts the water source protection legislation that is about to be brought out. I have to put it on the record again: We have a proposed landfill in the county of Simcoe called Site 41. It's had absolutely unbelievable opposition. Over and over again, there's more opposition to it; there's more scientific proof—real science—that's brought forward, and yet the county apparently wants to move ahead with this, and we don't know where the minister stands on it. We're trying to get a commitment from her.

We know that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is not supporting the proposal, because in his latest report last fall he condemned the fact that the Ministry of the Environment did not allow a review of the actual application. That's a sad thing for this government to have to say, that the Environmental Commissioner is opposed to the fact that they would not allow a review.

That brings me to other areas of concern. I was really glad today when my colleague Tim Hudak brought forward his concerns about highway construction and about the kind of money the previous government had put into the SuperBuild program. I have to thank the young Minister of Tourism at the time for the sports, culture and recreation program that you put in place. I know that a number of municipalities in my riding thank you, Mr. Hudak, for the approvals. It was a 20% provincial share, a 20% federal share and a 60% municipal share. We had some great projects.

I hope the minister will continue down that path, because I believe sports, culture and recreation are part of a healthy lifestyle. They're part of a healthy community, and we certainly need that. We have some plans in place right now, and I'll be very disappointed if this government doesn't put in 20% of the amount of money for those programs—at least 20%, because they brag that they're going to do better, and we'd like to see whether they can actually come up with one cent, let alone 20%, of the funding.

That brought me to another huge concern about growing strong communities and about expansion of highways etc., and that's Highway 400 and Highway 69, and Highway 11 into the north. As you know, the previous government expanded that program fairly rapidly. I know that it was never fast enough. The programs weren't moving ahead fast enough for the past critic on northern

affairs and northern development, who is now the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I haven't heard him say a word about Highway 11, or about Highway 400 and Highway 69. We can't believe what's not happening there. The way he talked in this House for the four years that I was here in government, I thought the highway would have been complete by now. You haven't hired a bulldozer to do anything yet.

The only project that is underway is the project that Ernie Eves approved. That's the only project that is underway, and the citizens of the province of Ontario are very concerned that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is not fighting to have Highways 400, 69 and 11 complete, because there should be much more construction taking place on those projects than what we actually have. That's a huge disappointment for someone who criticized the previous government so much.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Garfield, you guys are a failure in the north. We know that.

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the Minister of Northern Development and Mines heckling me. You're good at closing down—

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the minister—everybody's been very polite this afternoon. I would ask you to be polite as well.

1640

Mr. Dunlop: Obviously I've hit a huge nerve here, because what I'm saying is exactly the truth. People in the north are wondering what is happening to the Highway 69, Highway 400 and Highway 11 expansions. We need to know. It's important that the citizens of the north are treated with respect and dignity when it comes to growth in those areas. It not only affects their population but it affects economic growth as well. The previous government did a lot, and we've seen nothing so far from this government in that area.

I was disappointed to hear both the parliamentary assistant and the minister actually come out and say that nothing had been done by past governments, that this was the first government that was actually planning. It's a very sad state when people stand up and say that. There have been some tremendous projects that have taken place. A lot of the projects now being completed were announced, and funded most of the time, by the previous government, and now this new government is out there cutting the ribbons and trying to take credit for them. We all know what they are. They are buildings that have sprung up all over the province: a lot of the university buildings; the 70,000 new people places. Those types of things all took place under the previous government, and the new government of course has tried to take credit for them, even for the Northern Ontario Medical School, believe it or not. I heard the Premier actually saying that the other day. This government started that, and now Dalton McGuinty is trying to take credit for it.

We're getting down to the last 11 minutes, and I know the member for York North wants to make a few comments. I think that I will likely, in the end, support this legislation, with some amendments. I know there are

a lot of people in this House who want to have a lot of debate on this, and more hearings on it, of course. I think the hearings are very important, because we've already been told how important the planning process is. I'm sure all of the municipalities in the province, whether they're in the growth areas or not, will want to have some input. I don't think they want to feel like the farmers did today. The farmers of Ontario feel left out of the process. We've seen that today.

I've got to wind up by saying how disappointed I was today. I know we're not supposed to talk about attendance in the Legislature, but when 13 members of the cabinet are not present on a day when the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has a demonstration and wants to see the members—

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This place is respectful, and I think we do not mention people's attendance.

The Acting Speaker: I know he's getting very close. He did not mention individual members, but you're getting a little bit close. Be careful how you phrase this.

Mr. Dunlop: I won't mention them. I can only say that it was a huge disappointment today that we had people not present in this building. That doesn't send a very good message to the people who grow our food, the people who keep our rural economy alive and strong. We've seen the largest demonstration today in the history of Queen's Park, people opposed to this government; the largest agricultural demonstration ever happened today at Queen's Park. It is a sad day when we do not see the Premier present to answer questions.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to the member from York North. I have appreciated this opportunity to speak to Bill 136.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans. I think that, upon reflection, one might think that the bill should be renamed, perhaps more accurately, the Dalton to Decide Act or the More Bureaucratic Forms to Fill Out Act.

In the preamble of the bill, the Liberals say that the purpose is "to accommodate future population growth, support economic prosperity and achieve a high quality of life for all Ontarians." I think all of us would recognize that these are noble goals and certainly would like to believe that, in fact, this can all be accomplished in the process. But I think it's really more important to look at the details of the bill. And when you look at that, you come up with the conclusion that it is one more piece of evidence that this government has an obsession with planning instead of action.

I think it's fair to say that Bill 136 is just the latest chapter in the new McGuinty planning system. The new McGuinty planning system is highly centralized, carries with it a huge bureaucratic load, leaves very few decisions to local councils and allows for fewer housing and lifestyle choices for local residents. Bill 136 will mean a massive increase of bureaucratic, centralized control over

local governments and residents. The bill makes no indication of how local governments will deal with the massive growth that will take place in the already built-up areas. Issues around transportation, infrastructure or social needs of communities are left out. There's no plan for cash to pay for any of this growth. The government is taking away the power of local municipalities but leaving them with the bill.

There are some extremely important issues for people to understand and to hear on further from the government in terms of the decision-making process. This bill comes in what now appears to be the McGuinty tradition of centralizing power. If we look back a short time ago to both Bill 25 and Bill 26, we saw the ability of the minister, in Bill 26, to inject himself into the planning process and not have to follow the same rules that anyone else should. This was a portent of things to come. We look at Bills 135 and 136 and we see that this trend has continued.

This bill provides what might be seen as winners; the greenbelt bill, losers. How many people are in these communities? They're going to receive a certain amount of attention—provided, of course, that municipalities will have to jump through so many more bureaucratic hoops. Historically, municipal planning has been just that: municipal planning. But growth plans will not be municipal plans; they will be top-down, Queen's Park-ordered plans that local governments will have no choice but to obey.

Section 6 of Bill 136 outlines a whole range of issues that may be included in a growth plan. These include population projections, identifying growth areas, growth strategies and a whole range of development and planning criteria. These may not sound so dangerous, but when you read further down into the act, clause 6(e) of the act allows growth plans to include "such other policies, goals or matters that the minister considers advisable." What this means is that growth plans which give the provincial government absolute control over local planning can include anything the minister and cabinet want to put in.

People should also know that there is no right or possibility of appeal. It says right in the bill, in subsection 7(8), that a decision is "final and not subject to appeal." So the danger that people need to understand is that what has historically been a municipal power is in fact being centralized in Queen's Park. As I mentioned, we've already seen this process through the Planning Act, through the Greenbelt Act and now through Places to Grow. The danger of this is not only that the municipalities lose powers under this bill, but also that they still have to deal with the results of growth. So what we're talking about here are transportation and infrastructure issues.

1650

I want to take a couple of minutes to talk about an area in my riding, the town of Newmarket, which has been identified as a potential growth area. What I think people need to understand is that while this might look very appealing—certainly, for an economic driver, oppor-

tunities for further development have some appeal—let's look at some of the surrounding issues.

First of all, Newmarket is a community that is almost completely developed, yet the government has identified it as a major growth area. York region has a history of being one of the highest-growing areas in all of Canada; 40,000 people come to York region to make it their home. In Newmarket, that problem is obviously exacerbated by the fact that surrounding it is Aurora, already mostly built up. To the east is greenbelt, to the west is greenbelt and to the north is the part of the town of East Gwillimbury which is open for development, but it too is mostly greenbelt.

This creates, certainly, a local issue. How will Newmarket handle this kind of growth? Are we going to have high-density, big apartment buildings? Are we going to have the density of communities like Queensville, Holland Landing or Sharon, sharing in that density?

What about the need for increased social services and social infrastructure? Often government talks about sewers and water, but obviously there's the question of schools, community centres, daycare, home care, women's shelters; there's an entire range of recreational needs, all of these things that, historically, have been planned by municipalities.

All of a sudden, then, we're going to see enormous pressure on communities like Newmarket. Does the government really want Newmarket to look like Yonge and Eglinton? Do they not understand that the town was planned with infrastructure and services needed for the population that it would have for today?

As we look at this bill, this is a very important initiative that requires a great deal of response before, I think, people are going to see this as a positive step for individual communities across the province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments: the member from Danforth—Toronto—Danforth.

Ms. Churley: Toronto—Danforth, Mr. Speaker. It used to be called Broadview—Greenwood, and Riverdale, but it has been changed. We hope to change it again and get the name East York in there. Jack Layton and I made that promise to the people, and we're still working on that, figuring out what to call it.

The bill before us today: I'll have an opportunity to speak a little later in response specifically to the comments made by various official opposition members. I guess you could say there are some points of agreement, and then there are points where there is no agreement whatsoever. For instance, we can agree that there is a problem with the highways, but, and this is what the Liberals always like, they can come down the middle. The Tories are saying, "We want those highways, we want the money and we want them built quickly." And we say, just like around the greenbelt, "We want to save more; they want to pave more." They want to build these highways; we're saying that these highways are contradictory in terms of what the government says it's trying to achieve within the greenbelt legislation that we just passed. Now, the part of that overall plan for growth in

the Golden Horseshoe and across the province is contradictory. To be building these new highways at the same time as they're saying it's absolutely urgent that we have sustainable growth doesn't compute.

Our colleague from Hamilton mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker—and you're one, when you're a member here and not in the chair, who likes to say, "If you build it, they will come." We know that was about baseball, but we also know that it's just proven fact that if you build infrastructure, if you build major highways, oh yeah, they will come.

Therein, among other problems, are some of the problems that I'll be outlining later with this legislation.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm pleased to take a couple of minutes to respond to the leadoff hour by the official opposition. I appreciate the comments by the member from Erie–Lincoln in respect to his rather complimentary approach at the beginning and recognizing the work of the minister and the consultative process. I think it's only fair, as one member, to say that successive governments have had and will continue to have responsibility to support municipalities and provide direction on growth in the province of Ontario. It's not a one-party initiative; it's not a one-government initiative; these are things that have continuing lives.

I recall, back in my municipal time, as early as about 1989, that Gardiner Church, who was at that time a civil servant in the province of Ontario, visited with our local council of the day. It was the first time somebody sat down and began using the terminology "greater Toronto area." At that point, there was a rather negative reaction from the outlying municipalities that the word "Toronto" somehow would be used in a context that would involve them. It's more than 15 years ago now—16, 17 years ago—when that first thinking around the greater Toronto area began to happen and people began to think in that context. Now we're talking about the greater Golden Horseshoe. So times are changing and our context is changing, and each government has a part to play over an extended period of time.

The member from Simcoe North was commenting on—in fact, he didn't know about—some important activity that was going on today that the Premier and some other ministers were in support of and engaged in, and that's the Beacon project. The announcement that there's some \$2.5 billion to be invested by General Motors, supported by the province and the federal government, is being made in Oshawa today and in some other locales in the province of Ontario. This is probably the single most important investment that we may see during this particular mandate.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Let me pick up where the previous member left off. Why do you have the announcement today when you know the farmers are coming to Queen's Park? You create this diversion of an announcement out of GM when that could have been done tomorrow or could have been done yesterday. You were getting away from listening to the 7,000 farmers who were out on our front lawn and

saying, "You ain't helping us enough." That's what they were saying, in spades, out there.

Let's get back to the bill. The proof is in the pudding in terms of where they come with their funding in the next budget.

The previous government had a plan for transportation, both for highways and for transit. I can remember, as the Minister of Transportation, opening the Sheppard subway line, where the previous government put some \$570 million into public transit in that one project alone. We put hundreds of millions of dollars into GO Transit, and into renewing buses not only here in Toronto but in Ottawa, London and a whole bunch of other places. We also had planning with regard to a master transportation system, and, through our Smart Growth panels, we were developing places for intensification of population.

So in a lot of ways, the government, a year and a half later, is picking up what we had. It has woken up and is putting it in the form of a bill here today. But let's face it, the previous government was far along the way with regard to planning, but we planned with a difference: We put our money where our mouths were with regard to putting some of those planning notions into action.

1700

Ms. Horwath: I'm very pleased to be able to comment on the speeches of the members from Erie–Lincoln, Simcoe North and York North. In fact, I want to take this opportunity while I have the chance, before the member from my caucus who is going to be speaking to this legislation very shortly, has her chance to speak.

I would just like to say that initially the people in my community were concerned about environmental issues, urban expansion and sustainability, but once they got over that initial debacle of what happened in Hamilton in the public hearings around the maps and how inaccurate they were, they began to actually think there might be hope in this whole program the government is bringing forward. But then they were sorely disappointed to find out that very early on in the process already, there has been an initial caving in to the desires of the developers.

Quite frankly, when you look at the reduced target in terms of the intensification piece, the fact that the proposed target has been a moving target, unfortunately, is very frustrating. If I could say one thing initially, it's this idea that the intensification, which is so key to real, sound urban planning, is a key that has been lost on this government. It is extremely unfortunate.

When you look at what the other building blocks to sustainable development are, things like affordable housing, for example, density and ensuring that the density occurs in urban centres well before we even consider expansion of urban boundaries, then you'll see that this piece of enabling legislation called Bill 136, Places to Grow, is simply window dressing on a pretend plan to deal with the ongoing pressures around urban expansion, leapfrog development and urban boundary expansion. It's unfortunate that we're in this situation, when the government had an opportunity to do some really positive things in this area.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie–Lincoln has two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues as part of our time, as well as those in the questions and comments. Just to quickly summarize, as I said, there are many principles that are similar to the Smart Growth initiative, but they've moved off in some areas, and I think we need to bring them back along that Smart Growth path. It's important now to move beyond what is an academic debate—a lot of pretty maps, pretty plans and nice coloured dots—to actually making investments and having not only a 30-year plan but a plan for the next couple of years as well. To paraphrase my friend Walter Mondale—I use “friend” very lightly there—Put some meat in the sandwich; show where the beef really is.

As my friend from Lanark–Carleton said, in September 2001, we brought forward a comprehensive plan to invest in transit and highways, a balanced plan that had a \$3.25-billion provincial investment into our transit system, both within the Golden Horseshoe and without, and, as well, investments in our highways: the Highway 404 extension, for example; Highway 407 east into the Durham area; the mid-peninsula corridor through Niagara, in the Hamilton area; the GTA east-west corridor, to ensure we could address the leap-frogging issues, among others. So it was a comprehensive transit plan, hand in hand with a comprehensive investment in highways.

This government has brought down a number of initiatives in addition to 136: source water protection; the regime under Bill 135, behind the minister's closed doors; Bill 26, the ability to declare a ministerial interest in a local zoning and planning initiative; the change of language to “consistent with” from “have regard to.” Some municipalities are going to say eventually, “Why do we bother getting into the planning business at all? Under this government, it's all going to be run by the province behind closed doors.”

If you want to move forward, bring forward some meat in the sandwich: real investments in roads and transit; clear out the red tape in the EA process so we can actually get projects off the ground; invest in tools such as tax increment financing for brownfields; and I know it's a dirty word on that side of the floor, but realistically, P3s, partnering with the private sector, to invest in this type of infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Before I recognize the next speaker, I would ask the members and the honourable ministers to pay some attention, hopefully.

Ms. Churley: Especially now.

The Acting Speaker: Further speakers? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Applause.

Ms. Churley: Good timing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, all of you. The House is packed, as you can see, and my full caucus is with me to hear the great speech I'm going to give on growth. I'm sure everybody here is waiting with bated breath to listen to me talk for an hour about

the government's growth plan. I know you just can't wait.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you, not in your capacity as the Speaker but in your capacity as the member for Beaches–East York and our critic for many areas. That's one of the opportunities and problems with being such a small, but may I say mighty, caucus, that we each have quite a workload, and you have a particularly big one. That's because he was new—he and our new member from Hamilton. Of course, we piled it on because they didn't know what they were getting into. The member for Beaches–East York has finance, Comsoc, municipal affairs, GTA and some others that I can't even remember.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): She's sucking up to the Speaker.

Ms. Churley: Not at all—I sucked up to the Speaker earlier. I want to explain, because sometimes people may wonder why I'm on my feet as the critic for environment among other areas, as well as on these issues. I want to say that the member for Beaches–East York very graciously allowed me, when I gave up my critic areas when he joined us, when he ran in the by-election in this area—I was a former councillor but only for a short time, and the member for Beaches–East York had been a mayor of East York when East York still existed, and then was on city council, and was obviously the right person to carry on with this portfolio. I have admit that it was hard for me to give it up, because it is something that is dear to my heart. One of the things we agreed upon was that I could and would continue doing a lot of the land use pieces of the portfolio, because in our caucus we really don't make that much of a division and distinction between land use policies and environmental policies. They are part and parcel of the same thing, especially now, in 2005, when we're dealing with all those very complex issues around land use vis-à-vis air pollution, water pollution and all the other problems that go along with urban sprawl. We recognize in our caucus that there is a very direct link and connection.

In fact, I am proud to say that in our caucus, in every critic area, we tend to try to look through the lens of environmental protection to see if there is an aspect to any bill that comes before us that needs to be looked at through that lens. I know the member for Beaches–East York and other members in their critic areas tend to do that, and I think that's important. I've heard the government talk about that as well, that you cannot divorce land use policy from environmental protection.

I think that, as we've seen the grim and tragic results over the past few years, the direct link between contaminating our environment and our human health, there is no doubt in anybody's mind any more that this is an urgent matter we have to address. When we talk about things like growth, the greenbelt plan and all of those things, we think about air pollution and more and more kids with asthma. We think about what happened in Walkerton, about water pollution and the need to protect our water, and all the pieces of legislation that have come

before us under the previous government and now under the present government, some pieces of legislation that came as a result of the Walkerton inquiry, which made many recommendations. This land use policy before us is just a small piece of that.

That is one of my passions, to work on environmental issues, and of course municipal affairs and those issues are one of my passions as well, so I'm really pleased that I have this continuing opportunity to marry the two and to talk about them in one piece.

1710

Let me talk a bit about the legislation before us today. First and foremost, people need to understand that there's not a lot of meat on this bone. This is enabling legislation, and that is why it's really important that we go to committee and have further discussions about this, because the meat of the matter remains in the growth plans that are yet to come.

To this end, the legislation needs to include key aspects of growth plans for emerging and priority urban centres, such as the intensification targets, affordable housing targets and protection of environmentally and culturally significant lands. As I said, the meat of this legislation lies in the development of the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe and eventually other areas of the province. The focus needs to shift from growth—a bad word. Let me tell you why.

Mr. Hudak: "Growth" is a bad word?

Ms. Churley: It can be bad in this context, because even when we think of Smart Growth, we're talking only about growth and not sustainability. Instead of growth, I like to talk about it in terms of community sustainability or urban sustainability. We know that within the Golden Horseshoe, and I'm trying to remember now, over three million people are predicted to arrive in the Golden Horseshoe over the next number of years, and there is just no question that we have to find ways. That's what this legislation and the greenbelt legislation are proposing to deal with. But if we continue to think about it in terms of growth, then I think we're not moving forward and accepting the fact that we have to do things differently. If we change the language of how we refer to these things—I come back to the way I started to refer to garbage years ago.

When I got involved in my community—and this is a land use issue as well, in many ways, because of the difficulty in siting landfills—we got rid of an incinerator in South Riverdale that was polluting and stopped new ones from being built. The pressures are even more upon us to find different ways of dealing with our garbage. One of the things we started doing then—there was a group actually called "It's not Garbage." We have to stop talking about garbage as garbage, because so many products that end up in the garbage are not garbage. They can be reused, recycled or whatever. When you start doing that kind of mind shift, changing the language sometimes will help lead you to think differently about some of our problems. That's why I think it's important, and I'm sure the member from Erie-Lincoln would agree

with that. I'm certainly not saying here that it's ridiculous to suggest that we shouldn't be planning for more sustainability or urban sustainability and that there will not be growth, but we need to think about it differently.

What we have before us today, though, is vague and general enabling legislation mandating the government to designate growth areas and establish growth plans for those areas. As to the nature of the growth plans, seemingly at this point, and unfortunately anything goes, they "may"—that's what it says now—include various aspects of urban sustainability and social equity, is not strong enough and requires strengthening in this act. That's one area I've identified right there that very clearly needs to be strengthened.

Mr. Speaker, this cold that I had when I was speaking the other day to the greenbelt legislation is lingering. I can't seem to get rid of it.

Mr. Hudak: It's the greenbotch effect.

Ms. Churley: The greenbotch effect.

There are no criteria for consistency in plans across political or watershed boundaries. Consequently, there is real potential for the growth plans to reflect political interests as much as environment and human health issues, and that is of real concern. You know, just today in this Legislature, the official opposition, the acting Conservative leader and myself raised an issue around the greenbelt that was quite shocking; that is, finding out that the government had recently, while they were setting the boundaries for the greenbelt, held what sounds like a small but very powerful special-interest political fundraiser with the Premier, the finance minister and the finance minister's brother, who is a developer. There are allegations that some of these developers who were at this \$10,000-a-plate dinner, \$15,000-a-couple—and several of these people were there with their partners, I understand—were in a room with the Premier and the finance minister at a time when the boundaries of the greenbelt were being set.

You've heard me on many occasions, Mr. Speaker, express real concern about a section, a part of the greenbelt that's been left out, and even those from the environmental community and the conservation community and those who support the greenbelt agree and have said that those lands should be included. In fact, some farmers, the Christian Farmers, for example, when I was at public hearings—and the member from Lincoln will remember this—told us very clearly. Some farmers are opposed to the greenbelt, some are for it, and those who are for it made it very clear that they were quite concerned about this farmland being, as they described it, better quality farmland than the farmland that is in the greenbelt, except, of course, for the Niagara Escarpment and the Holland Marsh area, which are already protected. There is no rhyme or reason for this farmland that has been left out. In fact, one of my amendments was to include that very good farmland. All the Liberal members turned it down. We couldn't figure out why. I just thought that it made perfect sense to include it when so many experts came forward, including some farmers, saying, "Why not

put farmland that's better than some of ours in the greenbelt?" They didn't do it.

I raise that because, even if it is just perception—today I called on the government, as I have several times over the past few months, to keep its promise in the election to allow real-time disclosure of political donations. Every time I ask the question, the government members, whoever answers, say, "Well, we're going to do it in time. It's complicated or whatever. We're waiting for the opposition parties to say they'll do it too." Well, that wasn't the promise in the election. But, you know, we New Democrats have said that we're happy to do it—no problem. But, the promise was to do it.

Now we have this situation where of course the Liberals are denying that there was any influence-buying at this dinner. This was a fundraiser, and all parties have fundraisers. But, you know, the smell is there, because you have this connection, because the government allowed the way that the greenbelt was set up. At the end of the day, the boundaries were set, as we understand it, in the Premier's office. So whether or not they say there was science, the Tories say there wasn't. I believe that for most of the lands, with some key exceptions, there are good reasons why they are in the greenbelt. But I believe that there is no good reason for the farmland that was left out. So even the perception that a fundraiser of this magnitude and the promise not being kept to disclose who was there—it leaves a very bad impression.

I also think that—coming back to the growth plan before us today—when you have the potential for these growth plans, yet to be set, to reflect political interests as much as the environment and human health interests, you've got a problem. Allowing it to go ahead like this, the government is actually opening itself up to those kinds of accusations once again. That is something that really needs to be—not only for the benefit of the people of Ontario, but for the benefit of government members, I would say, so that everything is clean, above-board, transparent and there is not even any perception of political interference.

Proposed growth plans need to mandate core elements of community sustainability. For example, stating that a growth plan may contain some components, such as intensification and density of new development, the protection of sensitive and significant lands, including agricultural lands and water resources, and provisions for affordable housing, is meaningless. We know that core elements of sound urban planning and equity need to be mandated, so that the government doesn't just pick and choose in accordance with political ends. Given the act's list of policies, goals and criteria that may be—that word "may" again—included in growth plans, regard for renewable resources and energy efficiency—energy efficiency is another huge component, along with transportation—is noticeably lacking in the plan we have before us, the enabling legislation.

1720

Under clause 7(4)(a), dealing with the amendment of proposed growth plans by the hearings officers, the

minister may—there's that word again—notify the public regarding amended plans. Why not just put it in there very clearly that the public has the right and will be notified? Why is that "may" stuck in there? That sets off alarm bells with me. It means there can be political interference once again, even if it's just perception, even if there might be a good reason for it. The fact that word is in there allowing the government to pick and choose what they will allow the public to be aware of, and if they are, for instance, going to amend any of those plans—it needs to be changed to "shall." There's no question about it. I put the government members on notice that that will be an amendment of mine.

I hope I'll have much more success in my amendments in committee than I did on the greenbelt. I was not so successful there, although I genuinely felt that some of the Liberal members sitting on the committee were quite sympathetic to my amendments.

Mr. Hudak: Like the floating greenbelt.

Ms. Churley: Like the floating greenbelt. I think those on the committee really understood this legislation. I commend all the members on the committee, from all three parties. Well, I was the only member from my party, so I guess I'm commending myself too. I think we all did a good job in terms of understanding the issues and going out and listening to the public, and hearing and understanding where some of the problems were in that legislation. The public gave us all kinds of suggestions as to how to improve it, and virtually none of those amendments were accepted—the floating greenbelt, for instance. I'm glad the member from Erie–Lincoln raised it.

The government promised and promised that there would be a permanent greenbelt, and then we find out—I made an amendment to fix it. As I said before, I really thought it was an oversight, because the government had promised a permanent greenbelt. There was a lot of scurrying about in committee, because they recognized—remember that?—that I had discovered a real weakness in the plan here. There was a lot of scrambling around. They came forward with their own amendment, because I guess mine went too far, basically saying, "Look, once the parameters have been set"—that wasn't being done right then and there when we passed the legislation, because they had until March 9 to do that. That was the date set for setting the parameters of the greenbelt boundaries. What I was saying was that once that's done, to add more lands—I am even more alarmed about this now, when I think about this fundraiser and those farmlands being left out. I'm thinking on my feet here. Because it's a floating greenbelt, what that means is that as long as the same amount of land is there, the same amount of hectares, the government can step in and take a piece of prime farmland from the south somewhere and stick in a piece of land from some outer edge on the north that isn't such prime farmland, and say, "Presto," because there are some pressures from development.

That could happen under any government if this is not eventually amended. The same problem lies within this legislation. The act is non-enforceable through the courts. Any action or failure to act under Bill 136 is beyond

judicial review. So clause 15(1)(c) needs to have “or not done” removed to make actions not consistent with the act subject to judicial review.

Again, another problem, as in the case of Bill 135, the Greenbelt Act, is that it contains no provisions requiring provincial works or undertakings—i.e. provincial infrastructure development—to conform to growth plans. This is a really serious problem. Only decisions made under specified statute must conform to the growth plans. Let me give you an example. The proposed transportation corridors—what they’re really saying is highways; they call them transportation corridors—such as the proposed one between Kitchener–Waterloo and the GTA, would not have to comply with growth plans. Now, on top of that one, more plans for highways were announced when the minister announced the growth plan for the Golden Horseshoe area.

There is a lack of public accountability around implementation and monitoring. The act needs to establish a comprehensive monitoring program for tracking the content and the implementation of the growth plans across the landscape and within various jurisdictions. That would provide, of course, the data through which criteria can be evaluated and growth plans amended so that they could better achieve the government’s stated objectives.

The government did recently announce—I was there for the announcement—the draft growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. I’ll tell you a little bit about that. It’s interesting. I was looking at some of the media that came out as a result of the minister of infrastructure’s announcement on this. I like the way Murray Campbell put it, in the *Globe and Mail*. He talked about the greenbelt in the first part of his article, and then he went on to say, “The second shoe dropped yesterday with the unveiling by public infrastructure minister David Caplan of a plan to show where those millions of newcomers”—ah, here’s the number too. Murray Campbell says it right here: “3.7 million people in the next 25 years ... a bit of urgency to the matter...”

“The government intends to use its powers to shape municipal plans and to make infrastructure investments to direct development away from lands that provide food, water or recreation. It wants to do that by getting people to snuggle a little closer.”

I thought that was kind of a nice way to put it, in terms of talking about intensification. That’s really well put. That’s exactly what is being done here.

Again, looking at some of the news reports that came out of the announcement: For instance, I think the minister, when he was speaking today, made a point of talking about all those who support their growth plan. I think he mentioned some of the environmental groups and conservationists, some of whom were very involved with the greenbelt. Once again, I don’t think anybody’s arguing that this needs to be done. It’s a given; absolutely. The question is how it’s done, and will it really achieve its purpose?

I just want to quote to you from an article by April Lindgren, who writes about the announcement as well.

She quotes, in her article, Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence Canada, which is my old organization years ago. I was the first full-time executive director of what was then called the Environmental Defence Fund. It’s now Environmental Defence Canada, I believe. What he says is that it’s not “nearly ambitious enough and is being phased in too slowly.”

“There are communities all across southern Ontario threatened today by bad development, by urban sprawl. They can’t wait 10 years for this plan to come into effect.”

Again, Mr. Smith is quoted in a story by Antonella Artuso from the *Sun*, and says that the “sprawl will actually continue unchecked for the next few years because municipalities have up to 10 years to get in line with this plan.”

1730

There has already been real concern expressed about how long this is going to take and the kind of urban sprawl that will happen as a result of not being aggressive enough in terms of timing. So the 40% intensification by 2014 target in this draft plan is completely uninspired and really disappointing, because we’re not reinventing the wheel here; it’s been done in other places. Research, in fact, completed by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal itself suggested that an even higher target might be feasible, as per greater Vancouver regional district’s target of 70% by 2021 and England’s target of 60% by 2007.

We’ve got a bad situation here, and an urgent situation, as you well know, Mr. Speaker. I know that in your capacity as our critic in this area you’re very well aware that the present redevelopment rate in the greater Golden Horseshoe is 15% to 20%. So it’s extremely counter-productive, in the middle of all of this, the situation we’re in as I outlined it, for the government to include three new highway corridors beyond those in the initial discussion document.

I was there at the announcement and I was completely shocked that these were added. I was complaining about the highways that were initially mentioned, but now we have had some new ones added when the minister announced them. I know the Conservatives support the highways, but if they really understood some of the implications of these highways they would agree with me.

Mr. Hudak: People like their cars.

Ms. Churley: But we’ve got to cut down the cars.

Mr. Hudak: We can’t all ride bikes like Jack Layton.

Ms. Churley: I know we can’t. I ride a bike too. You should go to my office. It’s sitting right there. It’s got a flat tire right now, but there’s too much snow to ride it anyway. I know that not everybody can ride a bike, but I know that everybody can get on a bus and get on a train if they’re available, accessible and practical for people.

These highways—I’ve mentioned some of them: the mid-peninsula, the 407 east and GTA east-west, the Brampton to Guelph—remain part of the plan. These highway corridors undermine the plan’s goals regarding the containment of sprawl and the promotion of more sustainable development patterns.

As I said, if this wasn't enough, the government has now added two new highway corridors to the mix: an extension of Highway 404 north to Ravenshoe Road, i.e., Keswick, along with the short northward extension of Highway 427. I find there are problems with each of those, vis-à-vis the government's stated objectives in this and also in the greenbelt, but the 404 extension is especially problematic, as it is the absolute key to the Queensville development. It will mean sprawl all the way to Lake Simcoe.

You have heard me go on and on and on about my puzzlement and my disappointment that the government is not including south Simcoe in the greenbelt plan. I have described on many occasions, and I'm going to tell you again, briefly, why this is so important. The government said it was creating a greenbelt to curb urban sprawl and protect prime farmland. The greenbelt legislation that passed is not going to do that. I supported the greenbelt, and our caucus supported the greenbelt, because we believe it's important to protect environmentally sensitive land and some prime farmland. I think it's nuts to not support protecting some land and it's important that it be done, and that's fine; let me set the table with that. That's why I supported it. But it doesn't do what they said it was going to do. It is not protecting some of the best farmland we have; it left that out. And it's not going to curb urban sprawl. This bill, the way it's drafted now, is not going to do it either. This highway just puts the final nail in the coffin in terms of what we refer to as leapfrog development.

Let me say that this issue is not just around the leapfrog development and the urban sprawl that is going to create, and all the traffic congestion, air pollution, gridlock and other problems we have—the reason why the government is coming forward with these bills—but Lake Simcoe itself is under tremendous stress. I have heard the development that is going on in the south Simcoe area referred to as development on steroids and the Wild West of development. It's just crazy up there. It's out of control. The people in the area really want it, the farmers in the area want it to be included, because they see this happening. They're very worried and they asked the government to include them, and that wasn't done. This is very alarming.

When we see that, at the same time, this growth plan is allowing an extension of the 404, there's just no question about what's going to happen there. I fear for the quality of the lake, because it's already under stress. I fear for the prime farmland in the area and for the farmers who are very worried that they're going to be gobbled up. I fear for the urban sprawl that's going to continue as a result, because people will end up just driving further and further, a little further out.

Already we see it: There are going to be more extensions to highways, and people are going to continue that urban sprawl we're so worried about. The 404 extension will put pressure on the northern greenbelt boundary, and the 427 extension will put pressure on the southern boundary. Coming back to what I said earlier, if they build it, they will come.

So much for the greenbelt as the cornerstone of the government's strategy for sprawl. I notice that when the government is talking about the greenbelt now, I don't think we're hearing them say any more that it's the cornerstone of the strategy for sprawl. I think that more and more, there's a recognition that they've had to admit that the greenbelt legislation that's being passed is not going to stop sprawl. This growth plan before us today is not going to stop sprawl as it is.

The plan takes a very weak approach, as well, to the issue of settlement area boundary extensions. There are no clear tests set for extensions except, in the short term, until sub-area plans are developed, only "factors to be considered," as opposed to hard tests, and I'm sure that made perfect sense to you, Mr. Speaker.

Without going into a lot of detail around it now, I want to put on the record some of the concerns that the New Democrats and I have with this bill. The plan takes a fairly blunt approach to intensification areas; for example, targeting urban growth centres and intensification corridors for high density—not less than 200 residents and jobs per hectare. But it makes no reference to issues of the scale and character of development—pedestrian friendliness etc.—that would make such redevelopments acceptable and attractive to existing communities.

The plan also takes a very unimaginative approach to employment land issues, prohibiting redevelopment for non-employment uses and barring incompatible land uses from the vicinity of employment areas in intermodal facilities. The implications of this for brownfield and grayfield redevelopment are unclear. This is, again, key. In order to be able to preserve our prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas, we need to be able to develop our grayfields and brownfields. It would seem to bar creative mixed-use redevelopment of conventional business parks, and that's a concept that has gained considerable interest in the US, in the context of the overall shift to a service and knowledge industry as opposed to an industrial-based economy. As we can see in my area of south Riverdale right now, there is a fair amount of some brownfield, old industrial land, and the film industry has really taken off in the area over the last several years. Of course, people here would be very well aware of my keen interest in the film industry.

1740

As an aside here, I was glad to see that Mr. Sorbara very graciously came down to my riding to announce that they were going to keep their promise after all and increase the film tax credits. Mr. Speaker, you played a role in that, as well as our colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina, in urging and pushing the government to keep its promise because we were seeing thousands of jobs disappear.

I bring it up because not only was there a lot of compassion and concern about the people who were losing their jobs from the service industry, the hairdressers, the costume makers, the catering companies, you name it, on up to the producers, directors and actors—we were very concerned about the job loss—but

it's also a very good example of what's happened to some of those old industrial areas as they've been cleaned up.

The film industry is a perfect example. Beyond the service and knowledge industries, it's a perfect example of an industry that needs a lot of land, a lot of value added and moves into these areas and creates a lot of jobs. I know that a lot of the people in south Riverdale and the portlands where the three major film studios in Toronto reside—it's a good example, actually, because a lot of the people who work in these film studios also live in the area. Many of them walk or bicycle or take the local buses or whatever to work. To lose that perfect situation where people can live and work in the same area as we're trying to shift ground and do things that way would have been a real shame.

There is, let me say, much more to be done on all levels of government in terms of making sure that that important industry stays viable, but I'll leave that for another time.

There is a reference again in this bill to a long-term strategy for mineral resource management in the Golden Horseshoe to include coordinated and orderly development of aggregates to minimize conflict with other land uses, comprehensive approaches to rehabilitation, including progressive rehabilitation, and opportunities for alternatives and innovative ways to conserve and extract aggregates, but nothing really specific.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this is another area of great concern to me. The new planning statement that the government just came forward with allows pretty much just unchecked aggregate resource extraction within the greenbelt area itself and more golf courses, which use huge amounts—talk about water-taking, both the aggregate industry and golf courses. The concern is—the Environmental Commissioner has twice raised this issue in reports as a critical one—that there's very little research. We don't know very much at all about what kind of damage is being done or how work around—sorry.

It might be me, the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, and I'm tired, but I'm finding the chit-chat to my side very distracting at the moment.

The Acting Speaker: I think it's not just from your side. There is a great deal of chit-chat going on in the room, especially here at the front. I'm having a hard time hearing you as well. I'd ask all the members—it's getting a little late. We only have 15 minutes till we break. If you would just try to keep it down just a little. Thank you.

You may proceed.

Ms. Churley: Thank you very much for your courtesy.

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Absolutely. I'm sure Mr. Duguid is listening intently to hear what else I have to say.

The aggregate situation is a bad one. The fact that it's been allowed on the greenbelt is a real problem. Again, an amendment I made was not passed by the Liberals. But I'm glad to see that there's at least a reference to a

long-term strategy, because I think the Neptis Foundation as well as the Environmental Commissioner both expressed real alarm over the past couple of years about this industry and the fact that we're not doing what other jurisdictions are doing, and that is looking at replacements and ways to recycle. It's just not happening. At least there's a mention of it.

Another concern: Too much specific detail about planning decisions is left to sub-area plans to be developed for the GTA and Hamilton, north of greenbelt, west of greenbelt, Niagara Peninsula and east of Durham.

I would like to say, in the few minutes I have left today, that the focus needs to be shifted from growth to community sustainability or urban sustainability. There are no criteria for consistency in plans across political or watershed boundaries. Consequently, you have the potential for growth plans to reflect political interests. I think that is one of my major concerns.

I would recommend to everybody here that they take a look at the Neptis Foundation's September 2004 report, *A Response to the Ontario Government's Discussion Paper, Places to Grow*. For people who may not be aware of what the Neptis Foundation is—I refer to them a lot—they do a lot of good work. They are a very credible and renowned organization that does research in these areas. Let me tell you a bit about them, because I refer to them a lot. I did when I was discussing the greenbelt as well. They're an independent, privately funded organization, and they conduct non-partisan research, education and publication on urban regions. That's what they do; that's their expertise.

"In 2002 and 2003, it conducted arm's-length research that provided a platform of information for the provincial government's Smart Growth panel"—that was under the previous government—and Neptis reports are cited in the previous government's *Places to Grow*. I must say that I commend the previous government—I don't commend them very much, but I do commend them—for using Neptis and including their studies and work in their publications. Their comments, as they say in this document, "are based on solid research findings into regional growth and change."

If you look at their recommendations—they've done a very thorough study of this, and have looked at what other jurisdictions across the world are doing—they give the government some very clear and concise recommendations of what they would like to see in place.

They're chit-chatting again. I don't need you to listen to me; I'd just like you to keep your voices down a little bit. But I would recommend that you do listen, because I'm going to give you—we've got Tories and Liberals chit-chatting here—some recommendations that come from the Neptis Foundation. You know as well as I do that they do very good work. They did very good work on the greenbelt plan as well. They gave recommendations. I'll read a few of them, because I think they're some of the most important recommendations we need to look at when we go into committee with this bill, to improve it.

One of the things they point out is that, "Economic prosperity in today's world is closely connected to the physical and social quality of place. To remain competitive, the region needs to ensure not only that its infrastructure is well maintained, but also that it offers an urban lifestyle that attracts talented workers. This means ensuring, among other things, a wealth of cultural opportunities, a clean environment, a convenient and accessible public transit system, and lively mixed-use neighbourhoods." That, I think, paints a pretty broad and clear picture of what we're looking at here.

When it comes to transportation, there's a huge piece missing from this plan. The only way to make it work—the Conservatives talk about needing these highways because people are still going to want to get in their cars and drive. If they don't have any other options, they are not going to be able to get out of their cars and travel any other way. As you know, the family physicians recently came forward and talked about how important it is to get people out of their cars and into public transportation, not just for environmental reasons but for mental health and physical health reasons as well.

1750

So we needed to see, and we didn't see when the government made this announcement—and we're still not hearing it—what is the transportation plan here? There is no transportation plan. There is no transportation plan, no money talked about. There are fine words being bantered around when we ask about it, but there is no plan whatsoever. There is no plan when it comes to public transportation, and without that, the whole house of cards will collapse. It is an absolutely key piece to this new way of planning our communities, our sustainable communities.

Another point that the Neptis Foundation made is that we have to remember, "We are not planning for the same population that we were 20 years ago: The baby boom"—that means us, I think, Mr. Speaker, and others here—"is aging; households are smaller; the population is more diverse. Planning has to change in order to keep pace with these changes." That comes from a report by Larry Bourne, *Social Change in the Central Ontario Region*.

Energy prices: This says, "Energy prices are likely to increase over the next 30 years." But of course, we see them increasing already—this from a government that, when in opposition, berated the previous government all the time about rising hydro prices. Now the government is bringing in policies—yes, hydro prices are going up—but what we don't see in place is a real conservation and efficiency plan. There is some planning around the edges but not like in Germany and other jurisdictions in Europe, where they are far, far ahead of us in terms of real energy efficiency and conservation plans. That has to be a key component, because prices are going up, we have global warming and climate change—all of those things that are interconnected. So it's not just about the high cost of providing that energy and paying for that energy, but it is also about a clean environment. Yet there are no plans whatsoever in terms of how we redesign and

design new urban communities, sustainable communities. It is completely devoid of any discussion about energy conservation and efficiency and green power—all of those things that are key.

I've talked about, and the Neptis Foundation talks about, urban sprawl being a major contributor to both air and water pollution. They say, "Areas in which residents and workers must depend on automobiles for travel contribute to air pollution, while replacing natural areas with roads, parking lots and buildings affects water quality." That's from Ken Ogilvie: *Air, Water and Soil Quality*. He's from Pollution Probe.

"Ontario lacks a region-wide vision for green lands protection." The Neptis Foundation says, "Only 8.5% of the land in south-central Ontario is fully protected from development"—that's not a whole lot—"and protection is fragmented among upper- and lower-tier municipalities, conservation authorities, and the provincial government."

"Ontario's agri-food industry is threatened by the loss of land to development." Again, that's what this and the greenbelt plan were supposed to have dealt with and have not done it, which is why amending this draft legislation before us today is so critical, because the plan in place is not going to do what needs to be done here.

It's interesting that today, of all days, when the farmers were down here, the Minister of Agriculture was not here to answer questions from the—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): He's at the federal-provincial ag meeting.

Ms. Churley: Yes, he happened to have to go to Ottawa today.

Interjection: He was here.

Ms. Churley: He was here earlier, but the fact is, it would have been a good day—let me put it this way: It would have been a very good day for the minister to be here so he could answer our questions and respond accordingly, because we had all these farmers here in the Legislature who would have been very interested in answers to our questions.

One of the things that we heard about constantly when we were in public hearings on the greenbelt was the absolute crises that farmers are in, in this province. The greenbelt, as I said, is just the tip of the iceberg for them. There have been so many problems that have been accosting them for a number of years, including all the new pieces of legislation that have been brought forward which impact them and affect them, without the resources to go along with them. The commodity prices, BSE, free trade and some of the unfairness within that—there are a number of problems which my leader, Howard Hampton, today asked questions on and has over the past several months. There are remedies, there are things that can be done, and the greenbelt alone and this draft legislation before us today about growth is not going to solve that problem. You need to put real policies in place to make a difference. That's why I was happy that there was all-party support.

I know that everybody is looking at the clock now in anticipation of my sitting down, but I'm going to end on this note, because today, of all days, was our opportunity to really hear from the agricultural community what they need. They have some really good ideas, and yes, it's going to take some resources, but they are going to be resources that are going to pay off in the long run. We need to see the government—for instance, one tiny little program that the NDP put in place when we were in power was the Niagara tender fruit program. It was really a fund to help farmers stay on their land and continue farming. Then the Tories came into power, just as it was about to be paid out—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: That's right. The Tories cancelled it just as they were about to pay it out. The Liberals should just immediately bring that back—just bring it back. These farmers need—

Interjection: They need to be talking to the feds.

Ms. Churley: Oh, it's, "They need to be talking to the feds." It was an NDP provincial government that brought in this program. Bring it back. You need to bring in programs that help farmers. They want to stay on their farms. They're not the villains here. The farmers want to be able to continue to produce our food for us, but they need to make a living, and they need to be able to pass that farm down to their children.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue; I have a few minutes left when we pick up this debate again. But now, it being almost 6 of the clock, I will sit down and allow you to say, "It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until ..."

Mr. Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of considering certain legislation, and when the House then adjourns, it stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow. I seek unanimous consent for that.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader has moved unanimous consent to keep the House going until 6:30. Is it agreed? Agreed.

CITY OF OTTAWA AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA VILLE D'OTTAWA

Mr. Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me just say that I listened with some amusement this afternoon to some of the commentary about what has happened to the Greenbelt Act. I know that this is not strictly dealing with this bill. I have been given five

minutes to speak about this very important bill, but I want to just correct the member opposite.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: What bill are we debating right now? Could you remind us?

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Your point of order is well taken. Right now we are debating the bilingualism bill of Ottawa.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Speaker, I apologize for that. Let me once again thank the member from Toronto-Danforth for voting in favour of the Greenbelt Act. I think it's one of the bravest moves she has made. She's going to be thankful for that for the rest of her life, because she did a really courageous thing: She voted in favour of a good bill.

In any event, let me very briefly talk about this bill. This bill is all about empowering a municipality to give it the right to pass a resolution or a bylaw that will deal with the languages in which that municipality will carry out the various services that are available. We all know that the city of Ottawa is a city in which not only English but French is spoken to a large extent.

This government is all about empowering municipalities, to give them more power and more authority in a number of different ways, as we've already seen with respect to the Planning Act amendments in which municipalities, after all, are ultimately given the authority as to how far their urban boundaries should be extended. I can give you a number of other examples with respect to the Municipal Act that we're going through right now as well. We're reviewing the Municipal Act in order to empower municipalities to a much greater extent than they currently are. That's what this bill is all about. This bill basically makes it incumbent upon the city of Ottawa council to have a policy that deals with the languages in which their services are going to be provided.

I'm very pleased that this bill carries my name and that this bill will live up not only to the commitment that the Premier made prior to the 2003 election but also to the request from the city of Ottawa in the way it is on the record with the previous government and indeed with this government as well.

With that, I hope this bill will have the unanimous support of the House so that the city of Ottawa can go ahead and do its thing, which basically means to adopt a policy related to the use of the two languages that are spoken in Ottawa, namely English and French.

The Acting Speaker: I understand that we're just going in rotation. Further speakers to the bill?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): This is a sad time for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's a sad time for democracy, because this bill is one of the reasons why young people don't go out and vote. This bill is one of the reasons why people are cynical about politics and politicians—politicians who say one thing to get elected and do another thing after the election. I put forward a motion in committee asking that this bill not be called for third reading unless the government could table

with the Clerk of the Legislature, Claude DesRosiers—un bon francophone, un bon Franco-Ontarien—the name of one single francophone anywhere in the world who thinks this honours Dalton McGuinty's and Madeleine Meilleur's campaign promise—not one.

I'm going to get that name, I'm going to give it to Le Droit and we're going talk to them about it. They couldn't find a single name, up until two seconds ago, and it's a joke.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): It's probably a relative.

Mr. Baird: It's probably his relative. Give me a copy of the name right now and I'll put it in Hansard.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): The Clerk has it.

Mr. Baird: Can you authorize him to give it to me now? No, they don't want to see it. They've got the name, but it's secret. The person is in protective custody. The person wants to remain anonymous because this bill is a joke. There's not a single city councillor in Ottawa who doesn't think this thing is a joke.

J'ai reçu une lettre aujourd'hui du président de l'ACFO de la grande ville d'Ottawa. Ils disent qu'ils ne supportent pas ce projet de loi, qu'ils veulent un amendement, présenté par mon cher collègue le député de Timmins–Baie James, pour la mise en place de la promesse de Dalton McGuinty. Mais tous les députés libéraux ont voté contre leurs promesses pendant la campagne électorale.

They put forward a resolution that was word for word from Dalton McGuinty's campaign promise, but Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party and Madeleine Meilleur and Jean-Marc Lalonde and all the other Liberals were more interested in giving an issue to the Bloc Québécois and to the Parti Québécois to play partisan politics with: an effort to linguistically divide the people of Canada, the people of Ontario, the people of Ottawa, with their cheap partisan politics. So I'm going to call it like I see it: a sham bill that's a disgrace, not just to the great traditions of the Ontario Liberal Party—Bernard Grandmaître, if he were here, would be sick. He would be absolutely sick if he had to vote on this bill. Bernard Grandmaître would have resigned rather than stand up and vote for this bill, absolutely would have stood up and resigned before supporting this sham of a bill.

Mr. Lalonde: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: We have a point of order here from—

Mr. Lalonde: I just want to refer to one of the comments and questions asked by—

The Acting Speaker: We have a point of order from the member from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me; I haven't recognized you yet. A point of order from the member from—and I'm trying to remember—Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Go ahead; a point of order.

Mr. Lalonde: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out that we did receive letters from groups supporting it. The president of AFMO, Jacques Hétu, is supporting it—

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. This is not a point of order.

Please continue.

Mr. Baird: What a joke. Le président de l'ACFO est Jean Poirier, and Jean Poirier knows this bill. I asked in committee—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: There you go. Now say you're sorry.

Mr. Baird: Baloney. This does not say that you're honouring your election promise. That was my question.

Mr. Bisson: John, let me see.

Mr. Baird: I want to tell you about our committee hearings this morning. I asked the chief counsel for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the top lawyer to my friend Gerretsen—and this is on the record in Hansard—“If the city of Ottawa wanted to bring in a bylaw where they only offered French services between 3 and 4 a.m. at the Carp library in the basement”—he said that would be allowed. And that is a disgrace; an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Bisson: This is from Alberta.

Mr. Baird: This is from Alberta, because they couldn't find anyone from Ontario to say anything good about their bill.

What does the other one say?

Mr. Bisson: It's the association of municipalities.

Mr. Baird: It's the association of municipalities. He said it was ACFO, but of course it's not ACFO, and it doesn't say that this honours Dalton McGuinty's and Madeleine Meilleur's election commitment.

So again, I beg the Liberal members, would you give me the name of one single person, a francophone anywhere in the world—it can be from Africa; it can be from southeast Asia; it can be from Quebec, from Ontario—

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: Leave my father out of it. It can be from anywhere in Canada that says that this honours Dalton McGuinty's and Madeleine Meilleur's word. It doesn't.

I'm glad that Bernard Grandmaître is not here—the founder of la Loi 8 en Ontario. C'est une bonne chose que Bernard Grandmaître n'est pas encore un député et qu'il n'est pas obligé de voter pour ou contre ce projet de loi. Je suis absolument certain que, si Bernard Grandmaître était encore député de cette Chambre, il parlerait fortement contre cette promesse brisée par nos collègues du côté du gouvernement libéral.

1810

I want to say, as I conclude my remarks, that I like Madeleine Meilleur, the minister for francophone affairs.

Mr. Bisson: She's a nice person.

Mr. Baird: She's a nice person, she's a good person and I respect her, but I just can't believe that she would support this bill. She was such a passionate advocate for francophones when she was on the Ottawa city council. When she wanted that bylaw enshrined in legislation—

my friend from Timmins—James Bay gave the Liberal members the occasion to honour their election campaign commitment. You might not like John Baird's view on it, but it's the same thing after an election as it is before an election. I was shocked, I was appalled and I was morally outraged when I first saw this bill. I should also say that I was glad they broke their promise, because it was terrible.

I want to put something else on the record—you're getting me going a bit here. No Conservative candidate in the last election ran advertisements against official bilingualism. There were Liberal Party ads against official bilingualism in the last election campaign; ads paid for by Liberal Party of Ontario campaign supporters against official bilingualism. What did Dalton McGuinty do to punish this mean-spirited attack on francophones? He made him Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Every single ad that Jim Watson ran in the last campaign said he was against official bilingualism. That's OK, because he was fighting Garry Guzzo. I think Mr. Watson is probably the only one who doesn't have to bow his head in shame as we vote on this ridiculous piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Further debate?

M. Bisson: Mes amis, c'est une journée intéressante aujourd'hui. Si on regarde où on en est rendu, hier soir ici à l'Assemblée on a eu la chance de faire le débat sur la deuxième lecture de ce projet de loi. À ce temps-là j'ai dit, « Écoute, je ne vais pas parler longtemps. Demain, je vais proposer un amendement qui donne directement au gouvernement l'habilité de faire dans leur projet de loi ce qu'ils ont proposé dans la dernière élection. » Le gouvernement nous a donné une opportunité d'aller au comité aujourd'hui. J'ai proposé ces amendements. Tout ce que ces amendements faisaient, c'était de dire que dans le projet de loi, tel qu'il est écrit présentement, si une municipalité, la ville d'Ottawa, après ce projet de loi est passé, décide—est-ce que je peux avoir les documents, s'il vous-plait, monsieur Lalonde? On est dans le débat. Donnez-les-moi. Je vais m'en servir. Merci.

Mr. Baird: He's the new page.

M. Bisson: Il y aura toujours une profession comme page quand on prendra sa retraite, pour vous laisser savoir. Justement, j'aimerais revenir faire ma retraite comme page ici. C'est le fun.

Le point que je veux faire est ceci : j'ai mis en place un amendement aujourd'hui qui était très simple. C'était pour dire que dans ce projet de loi présentement, tel que proposé, si la ville d'Ottawa—comme mon ami M. John Baird et moi l'avons dit aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée—décide qu'elle veut offrir les services aux francophones seulement chaque deuxième samedi à quatre heures du matin dans le sous-sol d'une salle municipale ou d'une bibliothèque à la ville de Carp, elle a le droit de le faire. Présentement le projet de loi, tel qu'il est écrit, accepte que la ville d'Ottawa puisse faire quoiqu'elle veut avec leur politique.

On a demandé à l'avocat qui représente la couronne de venir nous répondre à cette question en comité

aujourd'hui. On lui a demandé directement : si la ville d'Ottawa décide qu'elle veut donner des services en français seulement à quatre heures du matin chaque deuxième samedi dans le sous-sol d'une bibliothèque à Carp, est-ce que c'est légal selon la loi, telle qu'elle est proposée, sans amendement? Qu'est-ce que l'avocat a dit?

M. Baird: « Oui. »

M. Bisson: « Oui. »

Mais écoute. C'est très clair qu'un projet de loi comme celui-ci ne donne rien à la municipalité que la municipalité n'a pas présentement. Sans le projet de loi, si la ville d'Ottawa veut changer sa politique sur le bilinguisme, elle a la capacité de le faire, parce que nous autres, l'Assemblée, dans les années passées avons conféré aux municipalités l'habilité de faire des politiques municipales. La ville d'Ottawa, selon ses droits et selon son habilité, a fait une politique qui dit : « La ville d'Ottawa a une politique sur le bilinguisme officiel. » Présentement, si la ville d'Ottawa veut changer cette politique, elle a le droit.

Ce projet de loi, tel qu'intitulé et proposé par le ministre, M. Gerretsen, dit que, apparemment, on va conférer à la ville, à la municipalité d'Ottawa, un statut de bilinguisme officiel. Moi, je me suis levé dans cette Assemblée quand le projet de loi a été amené ici l'automne passé, et sur le titre de la loi j'ai dit que c'était une très bonne affaire. J'ai dit, « Je vais supporter le gouvernement si vous faites ça, et je vous applaudis. » Je suis sorti, j'ai lu le projet de loi, puis je me suis rendu compte dans deux minutes que le projet de loi ne faisait pas ce qui avait été proposé.

Aujourd'hui j'ai proposé un amendement. Mon amendement dit qu'on va changer la section de la loi qui dit simplement que, si une politique sur le bilinguisme officiel existe présentement, cette politique devient enchâssée dans la loi. Le gouvernement a voté contre. C'est clair que le gouvernement est en train, comme j'ai dit en bon français, de passer un sapin à la communauté francophone, d'essayer de les faire croire qu'on dit, « Oui, on va avoir une politique qui dit que la ville d'Ottawa va être officiellement bilingue », mais, franchement, ça ne le fait pas.

Le deuxième amendement que j'ai proposé fait affaire avec l'amendement qui a été suggéré par l'ancien sénateur—John?

M. Baird: Jean-Robert Gauthier.

M. Bisson: C'est ça. Jean-Robert Gauthier, l'ancien député fédéral de Vanier et aussi sénateur pendant deux années, et qui était impliqué dans la communauté francophone pour des années, nous a donné des suggestions. Une suggestion était pour amender la loi d'une manière différente pour dire que, dans le moindre des moins, si on passe un projet de loi avec ces amendements, il serait difficile pour un juge d'accepter que la ville d'Ottawa puisse faire un changement aux politiques de bilinguisme qu'ils ont présentement d'une manière négative.

Le gouvernement a même voté contre ces amendements que l'ancien sénateur, M. Gauthier, avait proposés.

Donc, c'est clair que le gouvernement n'est pas intéressé à faire tel qu'ils ont proposé. Je me trouve dans une situation un peu drôle. On a un projet de loi ici à l'Assemblée—ce n'est pas drôle. C'est triste. On a un projet de loi ici aujourd'hui qui nous dit qu'on va donner et conférer à la ville, à la municipalité d'Ottawa, un statut officiellement bilingue, et ça, je veux voter pour. Je serais en faveur. Je veux me planter ici puis voter pour.

Mais on regarde le projet de loi puis il ne fait pas ça. Je me dis, « Mais, quoi faire ? Vas-tu voter pour ou contre ? » Vous me mettez dans une situation qui n'est pas confortable, parce que ça me met dans une position d'être libéral. Moi, je ne suis pas libéral. Comme les conservateurs, les néo-démocrates croient qu'on doit être clair sur la question. Les conservateurs, eux autres, disent non. Ils ne veulent pas conférer à la municipalité ce droit. Nous, les néo-démocrates, disons que oui, on veut le conférer. On est très clair. Le gouvernement de M. McGuinty dit, « On ne veut pas être clair, et on ne va pas le faire. »

L'autre point que je veux faire, c'est que M. Baird—ça fait deux ou trois jours qu'il le dit. On demande aux libéraux de nous donner une indication faisant affaire avec quelqu'un de la population canadienne ou du monde qui est préparé à dire qu'il est en faveur de ce projet de loi. Des deux documents qu'on nous a donnés, l'un vient de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. Ils ont écrit une lettre datée le 18 février, pas trop longtemps passé; c'est assez récent. Si on lit la lettre—et je n'ai pas mes lunettes—ça dit qu'eux autres sont en faveur du concept. C'est un peu ça qu'ils disent. Moi, je suis sûr que si je communique avec M. Jean Johnson et que je lui donne le projet tel qu'il est écrit—et j'espère que tes lunettes—

Interjection: No?

M. Bisson: Non. Holy shit. Non, je ne suis pas capable. Excuse-moi. I withdraw that: unparliamentary. Excuse-moi. Je ne peux pas lire avec tes lunettes. Je ne peux plus voir. I apologize. I shouldn't have said that.

M. Jean Johnson, président : je suis convaincu que si moi et M. Baird l'appelons par conférence téléphonique pour lui demander, « Lisez le projet de loi tel qu'il est écrit. Est-ce que vous pensez que la ville d'Ottawa est protégée? » M. Jean Johnson de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta va dire, « Non, mais je suis en faveur du concept. »

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L'autre lettre qu'on a, c'est de l'Association française des municipalités d'Ontario. C'est signé par Jacques Héту. Je connais l'association des municipalités. Elle représente les municipalités. Eux autres, ils veulent avoir ce que vous autres voulez avoir, c'est-à-dire, donner l'habileté complète aux municipalités. Eux autres, ce qu'ils veulent avoir, c'est quoi ? Certaines municipalités veulent nous donner la flexibilité de faire ce qu'on veut.

Interjection.

M. Bisson: C'est exactement le point, monsieur Lalonde. C'est ça que vous faites. C'est ça mon problème. Mon problème est que la ville d'Ottawa a demandé

d'enchâsser dans la loi le droit du bilinguisme pour la ville. Vous avez dit que vous alliez le faire dans un projet de loi. Vous avez introduit un projet de loi qui ne fait pas ça. Là, monsieur Lalonde dit, comme l'adjoint parlementaire l'avait dit au comité ce matin, « On veut donner la flexibilité aux municipalités. » Mais vous dites vous-mêmes que ça ne confère pas un statut officiellement bilingue à la ville d'Ottawa. Je pense que c'est très clair qu'à la fin de la journée vous n'êtes pas en train de garder votre promesse que vous avez faite aux électeurs.

Je veux finir en disant ceci. Nous, le parti néo-démocrate, avons une position qui est claire, comme le Parti conservateur. On a une position opposée. Le Parti conservateur a été très honnête là-dedans. Je ne suis pas d'accord avec eux autres, mais ils ont été honnêtes et ont dit non. Le Parti conservateur a dit qu'il n'était pas préparé, comme gouvernement dans le passé ou aujourd'hui ou dans le futur, à donner à aucune municipalité le droit d'enchâsser le droit d'être officiellement bilingue dans leur communauté. Je ne suis pas d'accord, mais ils sont clairs.

Nous, les néo-démocrates, prenons la position telle que je vais l'expliquer. La position de notre parti est très simple : si une municipalité, comme la ville d'Ottawa, demande à la province d'enchâsser sa politique sur le bilinguisme officiel, on l'accepte et on la passe dans cette Assemblée. Pourquoi? Parce qu'on veut respecter les municipalités si elles font cette demande.

On comprend très bien qu'il y a possiblement une communauté quelque part en Ontario où un conseil municipal existe qui veut s'assurer qu'on enchâsse les droits linguistiques de leur communauté. Eux autres comprennent que si on passe une politique municipale—comme on dit en anglais, un « bylaw »—aujourd'hui, un conseil futur pourrait le changer. Il y a certaines municipalités qui vont avoir un débat à un certain point dans leur histoire pour dire, « On veut enchâsser ce droit dans un statut provincial. » Nous, le parti néo-démocrate, disons que si la municipalité, par un vote majoritaire du conseil, demande à la province de l'Ontario d'enchâsser dans la loi un statut d'être officiellement bilingue, on le fait. C'est ça que nous autres avons pensé que les libéraux voulaient faire dans la dernière élection. C'est clairement pas ce qu'ils font présentement dans leur projet de loi, tel que proposé aujourd'hui.

C'est encore une autre promesse brisée, et je pense que c'est une histoire très triste. Le gouvernement aurait mieux fait de ne rien faire que d'introduire ce projet de loi.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

L'hon. M. Gerretsen: En français.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I wouldn't want to speak your French.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Neither would I.

Mr. Sterling: When this bill went to committee, there was an opportunity to amend it. Amendments were put forward by my colleague the member from Nepean-Carleton; they were turned aside. The member from the New Democratic Party wanted to put forward some

amendments; the government rebuffed them and put them aside.

I see a number of members here, but a lot of people from eastern Ontario are missing tonight. I understand their reluctance to be here, because this really is an embarrassment for the francophone community in Ottawa–Carleton, given the promises of our Premier of the day.

I'm not sad that they turned their story around, because I believe this is an issue that can be worked out at the municipal level. That was the position of the former government of Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario, and this government has finally seen the light to adopt our policy in the past. It's only the idea that Mr. McGuinty said to the francophone community, "We're going to pull on a string; we're going to tell you you're going to get an officially bilingual city," and he didn't deliver.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Are there any other honourable members who wish to speak?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): He gets a response.

The Deputy Speaker: I get that as being correct. Now that I've had the assistance of the minister, response?

M. Bisson: Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Merci. Are there any other honourable members who wish to speak to the bill?

Minister of Municipal Affairs, you have the opportunity to respond.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: This is a great bill, and I hope everyone in the House will support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 163.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce in the gallery Ronald Caza, the lawyer who represented the Montfort Hospital when they were threatening to close it and who will make sure that the bill being passed today will be respected.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member that's not a point of order, but we welcome our guest.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to also recognize Ronald Caza. The Montfort issue was of course a very divisive one, and when the government announced it would not appeal the Court of Appeal decision, the people at the Montfort were tremendously classy and warm-spirited. I'm pleased he could join us in the House today. It certainly will not take a long time for him to interpret legally the qualifications and the obligations—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nepean—Carleton, I remind you that's not a point of order either.

Mr. Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent for M^e Caza to give us his legal opinion on this bill. I would guess that he would be on-side with the opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: That too is not a point of order.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The minister has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

It now being well past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1828.

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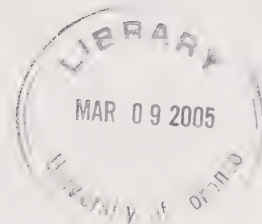
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Jeudi 3 mars 2005

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Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 mars 2005

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

VQA WINE STORES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES MAGASINS DE VINS DE LA VINTNERS QUALITY ALLIANCE

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to authorize a group of manufacturers of Ontario wines to sell Vintners Quality Alliance wines /
Projet de loi 7, Loi autorisant un groupe de fabricants de vins de l'Ontario à vendre des vins de la Vintners Quality Alliance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Hudak, you have 10 minutes.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I'm very pleased today to begin the second reading debate on Bill 7, which, if passed, would create a new type of retail establishment in the province of Ontario: 100% Ontario VQA wine stores. It is time for us to uncork the potential of our VQA wineries in the province of Ontario. We need to uncork the VQA wine stores today, because our wine sales for VQA are currently in decline. We need to uncork our wine sales as well, to assist our agriculture sector, our tourism sector and our wineries, not only in Niagara and Prince Edward county but in Lake Erie North Shore and Pelee Island as well.

This bill, if passed, would create a new type of retail establishment. We call it a VQA Ontario wine store. Basically, it would allow different wineries to come together in groups and sell each other's products. It would give cabinet the authority to determine the number, location and ownership model of these Ontario VQA wine stores.

Let me say from the outset, to frame this debate, the clear and simple illustration of the problem that this bill seeks to fix. This weekend is Cuvée, the Ontario Wine Awards. It's like the Academy Awards for wines in the province of Ontario. Of the top 49 wines nominated—the best of the best that the province has to offer—only 10 are currently available at the LCBO. So approximately 20% only are available at the LCBO.

One famous winemaker from Pillitteri Estates in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Sue-Ann Staff, said in the National Post: "It drives me crazy. How come I can't buy Ontario

wines at the LCBO?" I'm pleased to introduce Sue-Ann Staff, an award-winning winemaker, who is joining us in the gallery here today. Welcome, Sue-Ann.

Let me first illustrate the problem that causes only 10 of 49 wines to be available at the LCBO. Government policy in the province today actually hinders Ontario VQA wine sales and restricts the profitability of VQA wineries. For example, government policy currently limits the number of retail outlets a winery can have to a single winery. Any winery created from 1993 through the future is allowed only one retail outlet. So consumers may have exposure if they happen by in Niagara, Pelee or Prince Edward county, but otherwise, they wouldn't have exposure to all the wines that operator has to offer.

Second, not only that, but government policy strictly limits the single store. The retail store cannot be in a village or a town, or in downtown Toronto. It can only be at the site of the grape crush itself; so at the winery, as opposed to a place of potentially higher traffic. The Niagara Escarpment Commission today is putting increasing limits on what that retail space can be—if it's to be a restaurant, the number of seats it can have and the type of food it can sell—with the goal of protecting the environment, which we all respect. But there are increasingly more restrictions being put on that on-site winery, which wouldn't exist to the same extent if it were in a town or village.

The greenbelt legislation recently passed by this government—with our objections to it—Bill 135, can bring an entire new planning regime out of the office of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In fact, if the Bedggood and Vancief recommendations to the government are put in place, all the wineries that currently exist in the greenbelt area would not exist, under those recommendations that limit the square footage and how much value can come out of that. The greenbelt is a spectre of further restrictions on wineries as they exist today. It means that Henry of Pelham or EastDell Estates, for example, would never exist under those rules.

Third, government policy restricts the product itself. Only those wines produced at that particular winery can be sold at the retail outlet. By way of example, if a young entrepreneur like Sue-Ann Staff wanted to open up her own winery in the province and seek a retail license, she would find herself restricted to a single retail outlet in rural Ontario, with restrictions on the size and shape of the establishment and on the products she could sell.

The typical answer to that entrepreneur is, "You could always sell your products at the LCBO." But let me address that issue as well. The LCBO, as a creature of

government, is increasingly mandated to maximize its net revenues. This is a legitimate policy option, but there are downsides as well. It means that policies that promote domestic products like VQA wine and microbreweries could be the sacrificial lambs on the altar of revenue maximization. Similarly, maximizing net revenue drives the LCBO to favour large, non-Ontario wineries that can supply large volumes of wine and do so quickly. In other words, the LCBO has become the Wal-Mart of our beverage alcohol retail system. Larger wineries, French and Californian—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, with some exceptions—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Wal-Mart needs a union.

Mr. Hudak: —they go with the big box retailers. So especially French, Californian and Australian wineries help the LCBO meet these demands, because their size enables them to meet the LCBO door-to-floor policy. Smaller Ontario wineries are disadvantaged in this system, because they produce a high-quality product but in smaller volumes and cannot consistently meet the terms required by the LCBO.

The LCBO will make inroads. The craft winery program, for example, is a success in that area. However, I would argue that the Wal-Mart of any retail system will never be a satisfactory solution for the craft product market. As in Leamington or Niagara Falls or Welland, while you're going to have Wal-Marts, you also need specialty stores at the same time. VQA Ontario wine stores are an example of that kind of specialty shop.

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I stand proudly on our record in government. I had a very good, strong working relationship with Andy Brandt and the LCBO, and I thank them for their support for the wine industry. For example, we introduced over 1.1 kilometres of additional shelf space for Ontario wines. We saw a 20% increase in Ontario wine sales at that point in time. I refer to the craft winery program, VQA advocates and such. These were important steps that were helpful to the industry, but there is a lot more that needs to be done. If we are mandating the LCBO to maximize revenue to move toward being the Wal-Mart of our system, it will never be a satisfactory solution to the problem that exists. Let me give some examples. Over two thirds of the wine currently sold in the LCBO is non-Ontario wine. Only 5% of the wine sold at the LCBO is VQA. So for every bottle of VQA wine sold, 14 litres of imported wine are sold at the same time.

How does the bill solve the problem? The bill, if passed, would create a new type of retail outlet called Ontario VQA wine stores to show off our award winning 100% Ontario product. Effectively, it would allow wineries to group together and cross-sale each other's brands, giving cabinet the authority to determine the number and location of these Ontario VQA wine stores. I would encourage cabinet to look at high-traffic and busy tourism areas to maximize the exposure of Canadians and tourists alike to our award-winning VQA wines.

Currently, this model exists in British Columbia. It began in 1995 with 12 stores; in 2003, BC authorized nine more stores. BC has not yet had any difficulties with international trade issues, as we may hear arguments about from the parliamentary assistant. In the United States, New York, California and Pennsylvania, among other states, have policies that favour exclusive outlets for their domestic wines. I'll anticipate some arguments from the parliamentary assistant about NAFTA and WTO regulations. My colleague from Niagara Centre says they have spurious arguments from the other side. Maybe he won't go down that path, and I hope he doesn't.

What aggravates grape growers in wineries to no end is that when you walk into the LCBO today, you see two thirds of the shelves dedicated to imported wine. If you walked into the LCBO in this past week, there's a major promotion for French wines in newspapers and on radio and in in-store promotions; this on the heels of a huge promotion for Australian wines. I have no presumption that in Canberra or Sacramento or Paris, France, they're watching this argument here today to bring forward some sort of trade dispute, but if they care, my God, they worship the LCBO as heroes. The biggest seller of French, Australian and Californian wines in the entire world is the LCBO itself.

Second, Canada and the EU recently negotiated changes to an agreement dealing with wineries and wine sales. In short, as part of that agreement, there are no restrictions on off-site stores in that agreement. Third, VQA wine stores exist already in British Columbia. With the review of the beverage alcohol system taking place today, there's no better time for the assembly to pass this bill, to send a strong signal to the government and its review panel to do more for Ontario VQA wineries.

Let me say once more, only 10 out of 49 nominated best Ontario wines are currently available at the LCBO. The wine council will tell you that for every dollar of imported wine sales, there's only a 50-cent spinoff for the local economy, but for VQA sales, there's a \$4 spin-off on the activities. It's good for jobs, it's good for agriculture and it's good for tourism. I hope fellow members will support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: My colleague Mr. Prue from Beaches-East York will be addressing this private member's bill as well.

First, I want to applaud the member from Erie-Lincoln for his enthusiastic advocacy for VQA wine producers in Niagara and elsewhere in the province. I want to reinforce his observations and comments about the growth of these small boutique wineries—labour intensive—understanding, of course, that VQA means that you're buying wine made of 100% Ontario grape, unlike how this government rolled over to the big-bottle wineries when they insisted on being able to include as little as 30%—and in some exceptional circumstances, as little as 10%—of Ontario grape and grape juice in wine that's labelled Ontario wine. That is a fraud on consumers.

Just as an aside, I want to indicate that New Democrats are adamant that wines labelled Ontario wines have to be 100% Ontario grape. Quite frankly, I don't think you'll find a grape grower in Niagara or elsewhere in the province that would dispute that. Once consumers are aware of the fraud being perpetrated on them—they're buying cheap plonk imported from South America, amongst other places, and it's being bottled and sold masquerading as Ontario wine. That is a shame, and it is an insult to incredibly hard-working grape growers in this province, many of whom have farmed their land and displayed incredible stewardship of land in that unique microclimate down in Niagara—at great cost, because quite frankly, there isn't a whole lot of money yet to be made in growing grapes or any other crop or produce.

So we applaud the enthusiasm of Mr. Hudak and share his concern about the lack of exposure that small wineries, small vintners, get on LCBO shelves, understanding, of course, that LCBO is doing exactly what LCBO is supposed to do in the context of its stores. LCBO is the largest single purchaser of wine, spirits and alcohol, and quite frankly has demonstrated an incredible level of skill. Every day, we're confronted with amazing new projects being undertaken by LCBO and its staff that have revolutionized, I say to you, the sale and distribution of spirits, wine and other alcoholic beverages. And they do it in a socially responsible way.

Now, I want to have members of this chamber understand some of the history of privatization of spirit alcohol sales in this province. Mr. McGuinty is a collaborator and a party to the attack on publicly controlled and owned distribution and sale of alcohol and spirits. I spoke with John Coones, of course, from the Ontario Liquor Board Employees' Union. Mr. Coones, whom I know well, explained to me that Mr. McGuinty promised—Mr. McGuinty promised—in the course of campaigning during the last provincial election that he, Mr. McGuinty, and the Liberals, if elected—and they were—would put a halt to the franchise stores south of Highway 17. Mr. Coones tells me that Mr. McGuinty promised, and I have no reason to doubt the accuracy of Mr. Coones's recollection of that promise.

Rather than putting a freeze on growth of private liquor stores south of Highway 17—look, nobody has any quarrel with the franchise stores north of Highway 17; they're historic and they serve a legitimate purpose. But the creeping backdoor privatization has proliferated since the Liberals were elected here to Queen's Park. I tell you, yet another broken promise by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals.

I tell you that I cannot support a proposition which would ride the Liberal current of enhanced privatization. I am prepared to acknowledge that the LCBO should receive a mandate—in fact, New Democrats are encouraging this chamber to give the LCBO a clear mandate—to set up, quite frankly, another stream of marketing, another stream of retailing, and it should be in direct response to the proposition being put forward by Mr. Hudak today. I think it is time in this province that the

LCBO—and it's done a splendid job. You go up to the old Summerhill station on Yonge Street and there you see what a big spirits, wine and liquor store ought to have been: a far cry from Mr. McNeely's early days, when you had to sort of pull your hat down over your eyes and fill out a little slip of coarse newsprint with your X mark and slide it under the cage—

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Brown bags.

Mr. Kormos: That's right. You'd have some fellow scurry to the back and deliver it to you sort of under the counter in a brown bag. That was for just a bottle of rye, never mind anything particularly exotic. They didn't even carry tequila in those days, and the only wine you got was the wine in the big four-gallon jugs—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): The 571(b).

Mr. Kormos: Well, 571(b), Mr. Yakabuski tells me; he remembers it well.

Mr. Yakabuski: Oh, yes.

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Mr. Kormos: Which older brother's ID were you using, Mr. Yakabuski?

But look, I want to be very clear: We support the principle of setting up specific retail outlets that are designed to market Ontario VQA wines, especially in high-traffic and tourist areas. I am amazed that this hasn't been done already in places like casinos—and Mr. Bradley may want to speak to that, because I know Mr. Bradley, as Minister of Tourism and Recreation, has had occasion to cut casino-opening ribbons. He will have another occasion down in Windsor to cut yet another ribbon as Minister of Tourism and Recreation. I suspect that Mr. Bradley may well, in his capacity as minister, attempt to persuade his counterpart Mr. Watson to do something about specific marketing of VQA wines in those high-traffic tourist areas. You're right, Mr. Hudak. Places in Niagara, Toronto, northern Ontario and, quite frankly, airports—what an ideal place for the LCBO to be operating specialty boutique VQA outlets. I believe that we don't have to continue to pursue the privatization of the sale-and-distribution-of-alcohol road to achieve the end sought by Mr. Hudak in this private member's bill.

I will not be able to stand to support this bill. I hope, quite frankly, that the bill gets passed, because it then gives the legislative committee an opportunity to examine LCBO-based alternatives to the private alternative being proposed by Mr. Hudak. I'm not going to be lending my support to the bill. I encourage others to ensure that, if they do support the bill, it's conditional upon this bill being amended so that the sale and the retailing proposal inherent in the bill is undergone and undertaken by LCBO and OLBEU employees. That, quite frankly, is the deal-breaker for me at the moment in terms of this particular piece of legislation. But I don't want my lack of support specifically for the bill to indicate in any way my lack of enthusiasm about seeking out creative ways of doing specific marketing and retailing of VQA wines, especially from small vintners like those in Niagara region. It's imperative for me that it be done through a

publicly owned sale process and that the actual hands-on retailing of it be done by OLBEU employees, who have demonstrated expertise and responsibility in marketing wine, not only from the point of view of creating profits for the LCBO and the people of Ontario, but also from the point of view of ensuring responsible distribution of wine and spirits.

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): Last week, this assembly passed the important greenbelt legislation to preserve the farmlands of Ontario. In my riding, the farmlands are primarily the finest grape and tender fruit lands in North America. With the greenbelt legislation, our government made an important first step to preserve the land, but now we have to take another step to preserve the farmer; for what good is one without the other?

The member from Erie–Lincoln has had many opportunities, as a minister in the previous government, to help our grape growers. He failed to do so. However, I do want to applaud his initiative to move forward today.

During the greenbelt hearings, I became absolutely convinced that our Ontario grape growers must sell more Ontario grapes at a better price right here in Ontario. I'm not sure that VQA stores are the best answer, but I do know that selling more VQA wines is a must. I'm absolutely positive that part of the solution is to have more VQA shelf space across Ontario. Frankly, I don't care how we get there. The number one challenge for small wineries is not just producing the wine, but attracting customers. We already produce world-class wines, but our Ontario grape growers face special homegrown obstacles, one of which is the archaic and self-destructive rules we have in Ontario to sell our wines. Most wine regions of the world celebrate their locally grown products. They do not promote the competition. Ontario restricts nearly all of its VQA estate wineries to selling through a single on-site wine store, while it spends massive amounts of money to promote New Zealand, Australian or Chilean wines. To top it off, the five biggest wineries control 98% of the off-site wine stores. This is just not right.

The small winery doesn't have a snowball's chance in heck of growing strong. To most of them, the LCBO is not a friendly partner, because its listings and merchandising practices are not helpful. They set minimum volume requirements, but most small wineries can't meet them, and at margins too low to be profitable. The larger wineries have clogged the LCBO's Ontario wine sections with 70% imported wines from Chile and elsewhere.

You may not know this: If your bottle of Ontario wine does not have a VQA label on it, it could contain as much as 70% imported wine in it. This practice does nothing to help our growers and preserve our farms. This practice takes up space that can showcase our best Ontario VQA wines, and this is really stupid. We must promote Ontario VQA wines. Our government can certainly help by opening new retail channels. This does not necessarily mean VQA stores only, because a few VQA stores will not allow the industry to achieve the mass market that it needs in order to succeed.

So here is what I'm suggesting. We need to help the wine industry by making real changes in the LCBO practices to: allow VQA-only wineries working as co-ops to have the ability to sell wines off-site; allow grocery stores to sell VQA-only wines; allow Ontario wines that have at least 75% content to be sold on the LCBO Ontario wine shelves; change the LCBO merchandising policy to sell primarily VQA wines.

Current policies and regulations from previous governments discriminated against Ontario grape growers. Current content regulations encourage wineries to import foreign wines instead of using the Ontario grapes. Labelling rules permit foreign products to be passed off as "wines of Ontario." Wineries that sell mostly 70% blended products have the exclusive rights to 95% of the off-site retail locations. VQA-only wineries have fewer incentives and privileges than wineries that blend Ontario grapes with 70% imported product. This is just nuts.

The current support for Ontario wines needs changes. Unfortunately, VQA-only stores as proposed in Bill 7 are only the window dressing on a much larger problem. We can do better. Let's start helping our farmers today. Let's have a comprehensive, Ontario-first VQA policy that helps our growers. Let's really enjoy the best of Niagara and what it has to offer: a great VQA wine in a prosperous greenbelt.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 7, the VQA Wine Store Act, introduced by my colleague from Erie–Lincoln, who first introduced the bill on Thursday, November 27, 2003.

I just want to respond to the member from Niagara Falls. When the member from Erie–Lincoln was the minister, we had the largest increase in Ontario history for Ontario wine sales in the LCBO, in partnership with the wine council, creating over 1.1 kilometres of new shelf space for Ontario wines and overseeing a 20% growth in Ontario wine sales during his tenure. I just want to put on the record that when we were in government we had a good record. I want to thank the former minister for his work.

We're in support of this bill today. It's a good bill. It would allow the promotion of and increased sale of more VQA wines. Ontario has a wine industry that we can certainly be proud of. We produce world-class wines, and I'm certain that Ontarians would welcome the opportunity to try a larger selection of these wines than they are able to get through the LCBO.

The member opposite has given me a couple of recommendations for Ontario VQA wines he tried this week, so that's good.

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VQA wines are made entirely of Ontario grapes. This is distinct from Ontario wines, which contain as little as 30% Ontario grapes. Ontario VQA wines do not enjoy special status at the LCBO, and for every litre of VQA wine sold, the LCBO sells 14 litres of imported wine. So the LCBO has become an easier place to obtain Ontario wines in recent years, thanks to the increase in shelf

space that we mentioned before, but it's not enough space to provide Ontarians with access to some very fine Ontario wines. Recently, there was an article written in the National Post about the number of top Ontario wines that are not available for sale through the LCBO. It's a shame that only 10 of the top 49 wines in Ontario are available through the LCBO.

Wine sales take place in three different ways in Ontario: the LCBO being one, the on-site winery retailers being another, and the third being direct delivery from a winery to the consumer and the restaurant. I know that shelf space is at a premium and that not every wine can be available for sale there, but this is why the bill is a good compromise. It's good for the wineries and it's good for the consumer.

My colleague has indicated that the goal of his bill is to uncork Ontario VQA wine stores and to allow wineries to sell more than one brand of wine. Cabinet would have the authority to license groups of wineries to sell a variety of VQA wines.

I just want to put a statistic in here about the experience in BC. They created VQA stores in 1995. There were originally 12 outlets; in 2003, BC authorized the creation of nine more. Eight have opened, and the last one is almost ready. BC has not yet had any difficulties on the international trade issue. It is worthwhile. It shows off our home-grown industry.

This is what we want to do. Small and medium-sized wineries have difficulty cracking such a market. It's good for jobs, investment in agriculture, tourism and the grape and wine industry, and it gives these wineries access to a broader market. I'm pleased to see the wide range of support that this bill has. The Minister of Agriculture likes it; the papers are reporting that he is impressed by the bill.

I want to take a few moments to read into the record the names of several municipal politicians, wineries and grape growers who have lent their support to the bill: Len Troup, chairman of the tender fruit growers; Robin Brock, mayor of the city of Thorold; Peter Kocsis, owner of Crown Bench Estates Winery; Doug Whitty of the Niagara Peninsula Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association; Linda Franklin, executive director of the Wine Council of Ontario; Fraser Mowat, president of Harbour Estates Winery Limited; Albert Witteveen of the Niagara North Federation of Agriculture; Katie Trombetta, mayor of West Lincoln.

Despite the high quality of the VQA wines, there has been a recent trend of slowing sales of these wines. Since 2002, sales growth has slowed from approximately 20% in 2002-03 to 7% in 2003-04 to a projected negative growth in 2004-05. As of the 2004 VQA annual report, there were 71 VQA Ontario members. It's time to give this industry a boost.

I want to take a couple of minutes to let members of the House know that Niagara is not the only area in the province that is home to wineries. I discovered myself, in my own riding, two new wineries that have set up. I know that's pretty hard to believe in Haliburton-

Victoria-Brock, but yes, it's true. Kawartha Country Wines is located in the heart of the Kawarthas, in Buckhorn, close to the member from Peterborough's riding.

For those of you who would like to try maple syrup wine, some of my constituents are looking at producing that product as well. Maple syrup wines are produced in other provinces—again, this is new to me—and it's time to look at allowing them here in Ontario. They do not fit into any existing winery category, but I think that this would be an opportunity to develop unique qualities of wine to complement the existing wine industry. Maple syrup, as of course you all know, is one of the oldest crops in Ontario. For many years, maple syrup has been harvested each spring in the province, and it has gone beyond its traditional use, which I'm happy to hear. Maple Moon is the name of the company that is trying to produce the maple syrup wine, and Eric and Carol Thompson in Haliburton are pushing this forward. I know they've been in touch with the minister. Hopefully, they will get this recognized, and there will be maple syrup wine available here in Ontario.

Sorry I've gotten a little off topic there, but I think that the member from Erie-Lincoln has put a lot of work into crafting this bill. It has broad support. I'm pleased to support it, and I agree with him that it's time to uncork the VQA wines in Ontario. Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is a privilege and a pleasure to speak to this particular bill.

In Ontario, it wasn't all that many years ago, probably 20 or 25 years ago, when the mere sound of Ontario wine would make people recoil in some kind of horror. It was made largely from labrusca grapes, the native Concord grape variety of North America. It had what one wine writer said was a foul gasoline taste. It was known for being very foxy on the tongue, for those who are wine aficionados. You would know it was something you would not run out to the store and buy. In fact, even when you were a teenager and trying to sneak it, it was not something that you relished going back to.

But those days have changed quite remarkably in very short order in this province. I remember 20 years ago or so reading about the remarkable success of one Don Ziraldo, an Algerian native who had determined that he could make better wine than he was tasting out of some of the old, established wineries that were using non-noble grape varieties. He went down to Niagara and started to grow his own vines, his own grapes, and it was hugely and spectacularly successful as one of the pioneers—certainly he was not alone—in changing how we view Ontario grapes and Ontario wines.

Today, with the replanting of most of Niagara—and I think there's hardly a soul who still grows Concord grapes except for making jam—with the replanting of all of those vines there is a broad range of grape varieties, everything from Cabernet Sauvignon to Merlot to Syrah to Viognier to Riesling to Zinfandel. Everything is grown here in the province of Ontario. In fact, the wines are starting to become, as one speaker has already said, world-class.

I'm going to support this bill, notwithstanding that I agree with my colleague from Niagara Centre that we have to be very mindful and very careful of how this is going to impact the LCBO and its employees.

Having said that, I honestly believe that we need to move forward for the wineries of Ontario. They have become, and are, world-class. They are quite unique. If you travel around the world, to various wine regions as I have done, to South Africa, Chile, Australia, Greece, France or Spain, you will see that the wines are all unique to those regions. The wines of Niagara on the north shore of Lake Erie—and even in the growing and brand new industry of Prince Edward county, the wines and the wineries are unique, the growing climates are unique, and the terroir of the soil is unique. Each one of those produces a unique flavour.

When you come to Ontario, I have to tell you that, whereas years ago you wouldn't have drunk the wine, today you're absolutely delighted to taste the new wines that are coming from this province and how special they are.

My colleague Ms. Scott asked me about some wines just today, and I had an opportunity to taste two very unique wines from Ontario this past week. There was a Château des Charmes Gewürztraminer which was to die for. I don't remember tasting Gewürztraminer from Germany or from Alsace that was quite as good as what was produced right here in Niagara.

I also had an opportunity to taste a Cabernet Sauvignon produced by Marynissen. Now, Marynissen has a small winery and their wine is not available in the LCBO, but a very good Cabernet Sauvignon that was produced by Marynissen was available, of all places—and I commend the place heartily—at the Osgoode Hall Law Society dining room. They have a policy that I hope restaurants across the city and across this province will adopt. They have a policy of discounting the Ontario wines on their menu, a little asterisk beside the wine denoting that these wines are discounted because the Osgoode Hall Law Society believes that Ontarians ought to taste the wines of their own province and that they are discounted by a couple of dollars more than the imports are. So it was an opportunity to drink those wines, to taste them, and for me to say, "Wow, Ontario wines have really come of age." These were two absolutely excellent examples that competed as well as, or in some cases better than, the international competitors.

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I believe that we have to do everything to help these wineries. I'm a little bit nervous about the LCBO and the employees of the LCBO, but I'm willing for this to go to second reading and, when it does, I think we can really do something wonderful for Ontario's wineries.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I too want to applaud the member's enthusiasm. I don't want to spend any time lamenting about what could or couldn't have happened when he was minister. I think that would be unfair. We've got to move forward. So I just want to put that out there.

I think what you uncork is really important. I happen to enjoy Ontario wines. In fact, I purchase quite a bit of Ontario wine and distribute it each Christmas. It makes an ideal gift. But I think we need to watch that we don't do the wrong thing for the right reasons, and that in so doing we end up uncorking trade turmoil that would not be helpful to the industry. Lord knows we've got enough trade turmoil in this country right now. You just have to follow what's been going on with softwood lumber and the BSE situation and what have you.

Under the NAFTA agreement, which I just pause to note was brought in by a Conservative federal government, the off-site wine stores in Ontario and British Columbia were limited to those in existence or under construction or in the process of being licensed as of October 4, 1987. Ontario currently authorizes 290 off-site stores. On January 5, 2004, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade actually wrote to the Ontario government with a reminder that any increase in the number of wine retail stores selling Ontario-only wines risked eliciting a negative reaction from our trade partners, particularly in the European Union. The negotiations we had with the EU were to make available in the EU a selection of Ontario VQA wines, and we need to be careful that we don't put that effort at risk.

We on the government side certainly support ongoing efforts to develop the Ontario grape-based wine industry but believe at this time it's really premature, particularly given the in-depth review that we're undertaking, which has set out five clear principles. The report should be available at the end of the spring of this year. The principles are; to safeguard socially responsible consumption, storage, distribution and sale of beverage alcohol; to enhance convenience, variety and competitive prices for consumers; to maximize the value to taxpayers; to ensure responsible reuse and recycling practices; and fifth, and very important, to promote Ontario's products.

My colleague from Niagara Falls mentioned a number of options which I thought were quite enlightened and useful. With the review taking place, this would appear patently premature. I think it's sad that only 10 of 49 of Ontario's finest wines are on the shelf; I share that. I happen to agree with the member from Welland that there ought to be a broader and more discernible mandate for the LCBO, and I noticed as recently as last week that even the member who proposed the bill was reported to have said in a newspaper story, "Mine is an idea to create greater market access. If the government has other ideas to achieve the same result, I'd certainly be supportive." I think that's insightful.

We are supportive of the general thrust of getting more Ontario wines on greater shelf space throughout Ontario, but we don't want to do it in a way that actually puts the industry at risk. Therefore, notwithstanding my enthusiasm for the enthusiasm of the member opposite, I won't support this bill.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It's our jobs as legislators to help, wherever possible, our constituents, local industries and businesses. Ontario's VQA wines,

unlike any other type of wine, are made from 100% Ontario grapes. No other wine can make this claim. Quite obviously, it's our job and our responsibility to do whatever is possible within our powers to support, encourage and help grow Ontario VQA wineries.

At present, an Ontario VQA winery is allowed to sell and carry only wines of their own production. Ontario VQA wineries are not allowed to carry wines from other wineries that also have the VQA brand. This needless government regulation prevents Ontario wineries from gaining the shelf space needed to be successful against their competitors from around the world.

Ontarians are presently able to purchase their VQA wines through three methods: the LCBO store, on-site winery retailers and direct delivery. While this may seem well and good, there are some problems. Direct delivery is often costly and it is increasingly hard to discover which wineries would offer this service. On-site retailers are certainly good, but obviously, as I said, they only sell one type of wine, made by one company, and how would I know which one to go to to get it? The LCBO is a creature of our own government and of course it's revenue-driven. Policies and procedures to promote domestic products quite obviously take a back seat to the non-Ontario wines and the profit they can make. The LCBO must stock products that will bring in the most money and make the most profit for the government, not to support our farming community.

Ontario wineries find it difficult to compete against big wineries from around the world. These foreign wineries can deliver an almost endless supply of wine for minimal cost. Ontario's VQA wines are part of a fledgling industry, and it is our job as legislators to support the tender fruit farmers who grow our grapes and the different wineries that employ our citizens. These smaller wineries are potential employers, taxpayers, consumers and producers. The time is now for the Ontario government to step in and take an active role in supporting our Ontario tender fruit farmers and Ontario VQA wines.

Yesterday, I saw many Ontario tender fruit growers on the front lawn of the Legislature. Just like our cash crop, grain, oilseed, tobacco and beef farmers, the tender fruit farmers are also struggling with the rising Canadian dollar, increased costs of doing business and lack of government support.

The LCBO is the only multi-location outlet for Ontario wine. It only makes sense that we should better promote Ontario VQA wine over other countries and regions. Passing this bill will allow Ontario VQA wineries to potentially open their own VQA retail outlets. Passing this bill will allow increased shelf space and competition among Ontario VQA wineries. Passing this bill supports our farmers. Clearly, it is our job as legislators to promote and support Ontario VQA wines. Passing this bill into law will do just that.

Why don't we give Ontario's VQA wines a chance to compete? This bill will support our tender fruit farmers. This bill will encourage growth and development and

investment in Ontario. This bill is good for jobs. This bill opens up a broader market for our wineries, potentially increasing revenues for the wineries and the province. Why should we do anything else but support this bill?

I support the Ontario tender fruit farmers, which is why I support Mr. Hudak's bill.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): It's a privilege to speak to this bill. Mr. Hudak has identified a very real problem in this province. I don't know how LCBO operates—I'm not sure anyone knows how LCBO operates—but here is what I do know: In my riding, in Prince Edward county, we now have eight wineries. Six years ago, we had none—a significant difference. These wineries exist because individuals chose to take a gamble. Knowing them, it is more than a business; it is in fact a passion on their part that they chose to invest in this wine industry.

Their investment has brought tremendous benefits to all of our community, to other businesses and to the community itself. They make wine that I believe is world-class. They win awards. That doesn't seem to matter to LCBO, but they win awards, and they make their wine with grapes grown in our county—an absolutely first-rate product.

The problem is, how do they sell it? How do they get LCBO shelf space? How do they market their product? The rules seem extremely complex. In fact, we struggle to determine why LCBO gives the majority of shelf space to other countries. I don't understand that. No other country would do it.

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The LCBO itself makes life very difficult. We have a very unique producer in our community that makes fruit wines, and there's no encouragement. Here's a wonderful, unique product that the individual owning it has struggled to sell. He makes a great product, but the selling is difficult. The current system is not even neutral, but works against my local wineries. I believe this bill, if nothing else, will flag that we need to do something differently.

I certainly support the current LCBO system. But I know in Prince Edward county we are attracting tourists from afar who now come there as a destination. They may not have the opportunity to visit every one of the eight wineries. It is certainly worth looking at whether there is a possibility or if it's feasible to allow one winery to carry the products of the others so that they could purchase Prince Edward county wines at any of the wineries. The wineries themselves may not want that, but at least the option should be considered and reviewed.

I'm certainly going to support this bill, because I think it will precipitate some questions.

We need to do more for Ontario products. I'm proud that our government is committed to putting \$2 million a year into the marketing of what is a fine product. Wouldn't it be nice if the LCBO came on board with us? We in Ontario shouldn't have to lobby LCBO to carry our wines. They should want to come forward and increase the shelf space.

I can say that all of my wineries located in Prince Edward county need support and encouragement. They need to be able to sell what is absolutely a world-class product. Hopefully, this bill will start us on the road to giving credit and support to our own industry here in Ontario.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm extremely pleased to support this bill that has been put forward by my colleague Tim Hudak. Of course, he had put this bill forward when he was Minister of Consumer and Business Services through the rural red tape reduction bill. As has been stated, this particular bill will amend the Liquor Control Act to give Ontario's VQA wine industry the ability to partner together, cross-sell each other's brands and of course further promote VQA wines.

I want to congratulate my colleague Mr. Hudak. He has been one of the most outstanding supporters and advocates of Ontario wines. He has done everything he possibly could do on behalf of the agricultural and wine industries to make sure that people in this province have access to Ontario wines.

In fact, I was quite concerned when I read the National Post story which indicated that only 10 of the top 49 wines in Ontario are for sale through the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, so obviously people in this province don't have access to the fine wines that have come on the market, particularly in recent years. We need to make sure, first of all, that we do everything we can to promote the tender fruit growers, the wine industry, and provide increased access to the outstanding wines that are available in our province. In fact, I think the wine industry is now pretty well everywhere in the province. I'm always surprised when I travel to different parts of the province to find out that another small winery has started operation.

This particular bill, if passed, would certainly allow our excellent wines to be further exposed and available not only to people in Ontario and all Canadians but to our tourists as well. I think it would be a great boost for the grape and wine industry, a great boost for tourism and agriculture.

These types of VQA wine stores already exist in British Columbia. If you take a look south of the border, we have California and New York, which also have wine stores dedicated to promoting the local industry. I think it is extremely important that we open up our industry as well and ensure that there are more opportunities than ever before.

I'd like to quote Linda Franklin, the executive director of the Wine Council of Ontario who says, "This is an important initiative to improve access to the marketplace for 100% Ontario VQA wines." She goes on to say that "Tim Hudak has been an outstanding advocate of Ontario wines, both in government and now in opposition." Of course, I said that at the outset, how supportive Tim has been of that industry and the promotion of Ontario wines and improving access to them.

The chairman of the tender fruit growers' association, Len Troup, also said, "It just makes common sense. We

live in Ontario, and we should be promoting Ontario wines. To do anything less makes no sense." Then, of course, we have the owner of Crown Bench Estates Winery, Peter Kocsis, who says, "Tim Hudak's bill will give the Ontario consumer an opportunity to be exposed to Niagara premium—world-class—wines. It would also help to level the marketplace for the fledgling Ontario wine industry." He goes on to say, "It's a win-win solution."

I can tell you that I certainly will be supporting this bill, and I would encourage all members of the House to support our wine and grape industry.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I want to start by saying that it certainly is our government's position to support the ongoing development of Ontario's grape-based wine industry and VQA wines in a big way.

Shortly after I was elected in October 2003 and after I had been appointed as PA to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I was approached by many Ontario wineries. They said, "Tony, we're so glad that you have been appointed to this ministry and you can now help us crack the Chinese market, because we know that wines are getting very popular in China." They are right. But I do want to echo the comments of the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, that supporting this bill at this time would violate Canada and Ontario's international trade obligations and would be premature, given the current beverage alcohol sector review.

In the May 2004 budget, our government committed additional funding of \$2 million per year for five years, beginning this year, 2005. A key focus of this funding is increased marketing for VQA wines.

I know that my time is running out, but I do want to share with members here that we are confident that Ontario's award-winning wines can compete with the world's best. About three days ago, I hosted a dinner on behalf of our government to the delegation from our sister province, Jiangsu of China. Guess what we served them. Ontario VQA wines—they loved it. We are confident that we can compete anywhere in the world.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? There are about 50 seconds left.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's hard to say everything we want to say in less than a minute, but we'll try to be brief. I want to point out the great record that Tim Hudak had while he was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, I guess, at that point, and how much work he did for the wineries and how much he continues to do for them as a member of the opposition.

I do want to say that last night my wife and I shared a bottle of Château des Charmes Sauvignon Blanc, and I've got to tell you, it was delicious. I'm fully supportive of Ontario wineries and I'm fully supportive of Tim Hudak and this bill. I hope that the House joins me in supporting that this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Hudak, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments of various members on this legislation. I do appreciate the attend-

ance of my Niagara colleagues here today. Thanks very much for the comments of the member from Prince Edward county, who clearly stood in his place and said he would be supporting this bill in favour of the wineries in his riding. I know the gentleman from Essex—he was in the Speaker's chair today—is a strong advocate of VQA wineries as well.

But I say to my colleague from Niagara Falls, we do need to stand together as Niagara members, and Stoney Creek and St. Catharines as well. Private members' bills are often more about the symbolism through second reading, supporting a concept. If you support the concept of doing more for VQA wineries, then send it to committee. If you have some concerns about particular language in the bill or certain parts of the approach, send it to committee, and let's go over those details. But I do say to my colleagues, "Stand in your place and serve it." You don't always have to read these too-eagerly partisan treatises from staff that say the previous government did nothing. It seems to be the first thing they always say.

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We stand proudly on our record of a record increase in VQA wine sales; the biggest promotion of Ontario wine in the history of the LCBO; 1.1 kilometres of new shelf space. I could go on and on. I thank the LCBO for that support and I thank the folks at MCBS for that support. But there are more steps to go.

To my colleague on the trade issue, this bill is about cross-selling, it's not about the number of licences. Cabinet retains that number. We don't have anything in this bill dealing with the number of licences, but we do talk about cross-selling of brands. I find it regrettable that the parliamentary assistant for MCBS takes the position that our policy for the LCBO should be dictated in the halls of Canberra or Paris or Sacramento. In fact, they worship the LCBO as heroes there because they are the biggest sellers of Australian, French, Italian and California wines in the entire world. Andy Brandt, who has done a lot for the wine industry, was recently hailed by the French wine industry for the work he has done for imported French wines. I do hope we'll have our colleagues' support. Send this to committee and let's do the right thing for Ontario VQA wineries.

BETTER BUILDINGS PARTNERSHIP

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should further its energy conservation and emission-reduction agenda by taking steps to encourage and support province-wide development of robust Better Buildings Partnership programs, as exemplified by the city of Toronto's highly successful and world-renowned Better Buildings Partnership program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. McNeely has moved ballot item number 54. Pursuant to standing order 96, you have 10 minutes.

Mr. McNeely: I'm pleased to use this time to talk about an issue that I believe is very important to the

future of this province. That issue is conservation—environmental conservation and energy conservation—and how Better Buildings Partnership programs can contribute to conservation in Ontario.

One of our government's main priorities is ensuring that future generations of Ontarians can enjoy a clean and green Ontario. I am proud that we are taking proactive steps toward this goal. I applaud the efforts of my colleagues, the Minister of Energy and his parliamentary assistant, the honourable member for Etobicoke Centre, in widely promoting the conservation message around Ontario. I especially applaud some of the courageous decisions that have been made to cut back on harmful greenhouse gas emissions to improve air quality in our cities and to hopefully slow the climate change process that is an imminent global threat.

In Toronto a few weeks back, a smog advisory was issued. It was a mild day with no wind and the pollution hung over the city like a cloud. You couldn't even see the top of the CN Tower. One windless winter day, and Toronto's entire skyline was hidden behind a screen of pollutants. A smog day in Toronto, our nation's biggest and most populated city; "Well, that's one thing," you might say. But think about this: Last summer, a smog advisory was called for Algonquin Park, one of our province's environmental treasures. To me, that's a clear sign that we must start turning the tide.

The closing of our coal-fired plants by 2007 is a very meaningful move toward cleaner energy for our province. I think it's great that we're looking to more environmentally friendly resources like wind, biomass, water and ethanol to produce the power we all depend on. Our commitment to cleaner energy also strikes a strong contrast to the direction other nations are taking. According to Robert Kennedy Jr.'s recent book on US federal environmental policies, *Crimes Against Nature*, our neighbours to the south have 100 to 200 new coal-fired plants on the drawing board. By closing our plants, we are planning for the future because we know that a cleaner Ontario will be a healthier Ontario and a more prosperous Ontario for years to come. Meanwhile, asthma attacks are doubling every five years in the US. According to Kennedy, emissions from coal-fired plants containing poisonous mercury could represent the cause of permanent IQ loss, as well as birth defects and even autism in children who are exposed while still in the womb. This is dangerous stuff, folks, and the US federal plan seems to keep adding to the problem.

Personally, I firmly disagree with people who say that just because the US isn't working toward conservation, or because it hasn't signed on to Kyoto, we should just throw in the towel too. There are many strong environmental voices in the US, and we should supporting those voices by standing up for our principles and doing something about air quality and climate change here.

I believe we have an opportunity to continue to show leadership. In fact, I believe we have a responsibility to show that leadership, to show our neighbours and our friends around the world that environmental responsi-

bility is in everyone's best interests and that it does not have to come at the expense of urban development or economic growth.

When I was a city councillor in Ottawa and vice-chair of the city's environmental committee, I was attached to a program that had the potential to demonstrate that kind of leadership, a Better Buildings Partnership program. I believe, and the records show, that Better Buildings Partnerships are excellent investments in conservation.

A recent report by the National Round Table on the Economy and the Environment looked at energy use and emissions by end use. According to the report, residential, commercial and industrial buildings represent 69% of energy use in Canada and contribute 63% of our greenhouse gas emissions, and at least half of those percentages are for heating and cooling.

By means of renovations to improve the energy efficiency of residential and commercial buildings, these programs reduce demand on the energy system, reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and also contribute to economic activity and, more importantly, even job creation. They are in fact one of the best value-for-money investments that we have for energy conservation.

Unfortunately, the city of Ottawa Better Buildings Partnership program never got off ground, thanks to the actions of senior bureaucrats following municipal amalgamation. Without warning, explanation or fanfare, the program was scrapped and its great staff was given their walking papers. I was extremely disappointed that Ottawa was giving up on such a positive initiative.

The city of Toronto, on the other hand, recognized the value of implementing a Better Buildings Partnership program. They went ahead and haven't looked back.

I want to take a moment to introduce Richard Morris, who is with us today.

Applause.

Mr. McNeely: Richard, as some of you know, is the manager of the city of Toronto's energy efficiency office and one of the world's experts in developing Better Buildings Partnership programs and making them a success. He will be leaving for England on the 19th of this month where the city of Toronto is helping the city of London to set up a Better Buildings Partnership program.

The city of Toronto's Better Buildings Partnership program is an innovative program that has had a great deal of success since it was started in 1996. The principle of the program is simple. The city of Toronto made a one-time investment of \$8 million in what is called a revolving fund. The money came from the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program. Seed funds were also provided to hire staff to manage the program. The \$8 million in the revolving fund is loaned out, interest-free, to the private and non-private sectors to help finance improvements to existing buildings, making them more energy efficient.

City experts and partners from local distribution companies, such as Enbridge and Toronto Hydro, advise and assist owners in developing retrofit or renovation strategies to improve efficiency. By making these renovations

to buildings so that less energy is used, owners can realize huge savings in terms of energy costs. And because less demand is placed on the energy system, emission levels go down as well.

The beauty of the program is that the money invested by the city in the program is loaned; it's not given. When the project starts to generate significant energy cost savings, the owners repay the loan to the city, and it goes out again to finance another project. The original investment, therefore, sustains the program well into the future. The same original dollars fund new projects. It's kind of like the gift that keeps on giving.

There are economic gifts, too. According to the city of Toronto's experience, the program only needs to lend 10% to 30% of the dollars necessary to fund individual projects. So the project can generate economic activity up to 10 times the value of the original government investment.

And with this economic activity comes jobs. The city of Toronto's results since 1996 speak for themselves: 440 buildings have been retrofitted; almost \$20 million is now saved annually in energy costs; CO₂ emissions have been reduced by 173,000 tonnes per year; economic activity has been generated in the amount of \$131 million; and over 3,900 person-years of employment have been generated.

Not only does the city retain its original \$8-million investment—Torontonians are very frugal—but over time it has actually grown to \$9 million.

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I want to suggest that the province could adopt the model put forward very successfully by the city of Toronto. If we were to make a significant investment, say \$20 million per year for five years, we could see impressive numbers. Assuming an average repayment term of 10 years, and assuming that the \$100-million investment could be leveraged by a further \$200 million from the private and non-profit sectors, we could retrofit 1,000 buildings across the province in the first five years of implementation. By year five, we could be eliminating up to 400,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions every year. By year five, operating costs for buildings—the energy costs—could be reduced by \$50 million annually and, over five years, we could generate \$300 million in economic activity and nearly 10,000 person-years of employment. These are modest estimates of what we could do and the kinds of benefits a province-wide Better Buildings Partnership program could have.

As someone who cares about the environment, who believes the science clearly shows we are in great peril from global warming and who is concerned about the kind of province our children and grandchildren will inherit from our generation, it is with a feeling of hope that I stand in this House today to promote a province-wide Better Buildings Partnership program. We have a successful model in the city of Toronto's world-renowned program and excellent resources with its experts. If we follow their example, Ontario will realize many benefits, many times over, for many years to come.

I urge this House again to support this resolution and I request that our government take a closer look at how a province-wide Better Buildings Partnership could contribute to our conservation efforts and help cement our province's status as a leader on environmental issues.

I wish to thank all those on both sides of the House who have volunteered to speak to this motion. I look forward to their contributions.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I am very pleased to join in the debate in terms of the member's motion. Certainly it's good to see the Minister of Energy in here today. I know he's very interested in what is happening in this area. I expect him to speak on this and maybe provide a little bit more flesh to the bone since he has come here today. I look forward to the Minister of Energy speaking on this motion.

Also, I want to say that certainly everybody in the House, without exception, would have support for energy conservation and emission reduction. That's very important. It looks like what the member is trying to propose here is a program—it's my understanding from my friend from Beaches-East York, who is a former mayor of East York—that was put in place by the city of Toronto in 1996 and was essentially dealing with the retrofit of commercial-industrial properties, an interest-free loan, and was run by the municipality. I would imagine that what he is looking at here, and I stand to be corrected, is for this to be put forth across municipalities in this province in terms of the industrial-commercial sector, which certainly makes sense. I don't know whether it applied to the institutional sector or if that's something that he is envisioning, because certainly the institutional sector that should be leading the way. The Minister of Energy will probably comment on that.

We've seen great initiatives not only in the industrial-commercial sector but also recently in the low-rise residential sector in terms of builders making their houses much more energy-efficient. I think that's a tremendous marketing tool. I was at an opening a few months ago in my riding for a builder by the name of Mason Homes, which has become part of the green program in terms of how they design their houses, making sure that energy conservation is the focus of the house.

I know that may not sit well with the deputy House leader, who is a big proponent of high-rise density—and I have nothing against that if he comes forth with respect to high-rise programs in the downtown areas. I know he has been to the city of Barrie and he knows that the high-rise is an area that obviously has to be looked at in terms of revitalizing our downtowns. Certainly the city of Barrie is looking forward to that. I know Minister Caplan will be coming forth and putting some meat on the bones in terms of what his initiatives are. The city of Barrie was designated as a growth area and would be looking for Minister Caplan to come forth and provide some information in terms of how much money will be coming out of the infrastructure program that should be coming down. I know they are expecting municipalities to change

their official plans to conform with Minister Caplan's vision of the great province of Ontario in terms of downtown revitalization. I think that's something that should be encouraged.

I know his initial 25 areas didn't include the city of Windsor. The Minister of Energy and the Minister of Children and Youth Services would certainly be looking to work with city of Windsor officials to make sure that downtown Windsor—it's a great downtown but it needs to be looked at as a whole in terms of high-rise and different developments that we need to revitalize our downtowns.

I know Minister Caplan is in conversation with the Minister of Energy. They are going to be discussing that at length, making sure that we come forth with fair funding across the province with respect to downtown revitalization, because Minister Caplan is a big proponent of high-rise development. And that's fine, because that's something we should be looking at in terms of energy conservation.

I'm getting lots of letters from condominium owners saying, "My taxes are going through the roof. Why aren't we fairly treated?" I forward those to Minister Sorbara, because I know he is looking at that area, especially from an assessment point of view. I know Minister Sorbara has a good handle on how to deal with land development and other property issues. But energy conservation is a big issue in terms of condominium owners.

Mr. McNeely certainly has my support with respect to an energy conservation program. I look forward to listening to the Minister of Energy, because he is probably very interested, and I'm pleased to see that he's attending the House today for this motion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I am just so happy to have an opportunity to speak to this motion this morning. Do you want to know why? It gives me an opportunity to talk about energy policies in northeastern and northwestern Ontario.

I have to say, I support this particular bill. I've got no problem. It goes in the right direction. In fact, you would know that Marilyn Churley has done a lot of work in this particular area, and the city of Toronto specifically has done a lot of work. I agree with the member that this is something we should move forward on in regard to trying to figure out how we can deal with some of this across the province within a public context. I wanted to say that right way.

The other thing is, I want to come back to my first point: I am so happy to be here. The Minister of Energy is in the House. He is here and he wants to hear what I have to say. I know he is keenly interested. He had a good night's sleep, he's here and he's ready. I have to say, Minister, there are a whole bunch of hydro utility customers in northern Ontario really angry with you. They are saying, "Listen, the Tories started this whole initiative of privatization and deregulation. As a result, we have hydro rates and extra charges on the hydro bills." Remember before, you used to get a hydro bill that used to be for the kilowatt hours, everything included?

Now they give you a bill and say, "So much for kilowatt hours, and, by the way, here's double again," so that you pay for everything else. People like Falconbridge, Tembec, Abitibi, a whole whack of utility customers that we send hydro bills to, in fact the largest hydro utility customers in the province—

Mr. McNeely: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think this is private members' time. This is normally non-partisan. We're talking about energy conservation. I don't understand what the member is getting at.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll keep my eye on the clock. Thank you to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I'll listen very carefully that we stick to the resolution.

Mr. Bisson: I want to thank the member for—oh, no, you've got to stay, Dwight, or else I'll send you the Hansard. I'm sending you the Hansard, I'm telling you. There you are. Stay.

My point is, there are many employers who are really worried about what all of this energy policy means. Conservation can be part of how companies save money when it comes to being able to afford the high energy bills they're getting and the extra 12% they're going to be socked this spring because of this government's hydro policy. Certainly, if you look at companies like Tembec in Smooth Rock Falls—now, they have their own generating capacity; they don't buy from Hydro. Actually, they sell back to Hydro, as the minister well knows. But one of the things they've done is looked at conservation as one way to reduce the overall amount of hydro they need, lessening their cost, and that's a good thing. That's part of what the member talks about in the bill.

But the basic fact is there is still a whole bunch of employers out there: big companies like Falconbridge, which operates a mine smelter division in Timmins; Tembec, with their TMP plant; the paper mill in Kapuskasing, and list goes across the north. They are huge customers, and there is only so much conservation they can do. You can do as much conservation as you want—and that's a good thing; I encourage the kind of policy the member has brought forward—but the basic fact is that there are still utility customers.

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You sit down with these employers and talk to Terry Skiffington at the mill in Kapuskasing, or to Picard, the manager in Timmins at the Kidd Creek Met. site—they're really worried. They're saying, "Listen, a big part of the cost of doing business for us is energy," because of the types of processes they use. For example, in Kapuskasing they have a TMP pulping process. It's very much an energy user as far as the process; rather than grinding the wood into pulp, they're actually going through a TMP, a thermomechanical pulping process, which is a high energy utilization method of doing it but a very efficient way to deal with making pulp for paper.

That's the same story as those of many pulp and paper mills across northern Ontario. If you look at Kidd Creek, they operate a refinery, which is a high-energy utility. There's no way of saying, "We're not going to use the

hydro; we're going to turn the power off," because they just couldn't run their plant. They're saying to me, "We've got a problem. Energy is a big part of the cost of doing business for our plants. As energy prices go up, it is making us less viable as mills that we operate." They are saying, "At one point, we're going to hit the wall. The energy prices are going to be so high that no matter what we do on the efficiency side, we are not going to be able to pay the bill at the end of the day because there is not going to be a profit after we pay our energy prices."

For example, after Kidd Creek Mines in Timmins, on their metallurgical site, got the last set of increases in hydro, they went out and invested a significant amount of money in order to find ways to save energy. They did that in order to offset the investment to offset those increases in electricity. They were somewhat successful, I wouldn't say completely, but they certainly went a long way to deal with what were the last hydro increases. I met with them and they said, "If we get a hydro increase of 20%, we'll have lost all of our investment in energy efficiency, and we are going to be at the point of having to make some decisions about what we do next." I'm telling you, there's a whole bunch of employers out there who are having to make decisions: Can I or can I not afford to run my plant? Why? Because energy prices are going through the roof.

Mr. McNeely is shaking his head. I know that he's shaking his head saying no, but that is what the truth is. We saw in Terrace Bay just this week that one of the plants is closing down up there, and part of the issue is energy. Yes, there are other issues out there. I'm not going to stand here and say it's only electricity, because we know it's partly the low American dollar; it's partly the regulations—for example, some of the regulations around the environment are making it expensive for them to operate. Everybody believes that we need to make sure they are environmentally responsible, but all of these things have costs associated with them.

Basically, what we're creating is a perfect storm for industry to fail. Energy is a big part of creating that perfect storm to fail. I'm just saying to the member across the way that I applaud your initiative to deal with the whole issue of energy efficiency, and I agree with you that we've got to go that way. In fact, we have a number of ideas—Marilyn Churley and Howard Hampton have listed numbers of them, along with members of the Conservative Party, and now yourself with this bill—and we need to go in that direction.

But if you don't get a hold of rates and we don't get a hold of how we deal with hydro policy in the province in a positive way, we are going to be in the position where we lose more employees across northern Ontario and other parts of the province. Since McGuinty has been elected, we've lost 6,000 jobs in northern Ontario, either temporarily or permanently, because of energy prices and other things that have created this perfect storm.

So I say to the members that we've got to get this under control. Yes, we're going to hear the argument, "It can't be done." Well, do you know what? Why is it that

Manitoba, Quebec and other places where they have public utilities are able to do it?

We have to say to ourselves, "Is electricity a basic infrastructure?" I think the answer is yes. And if it's a basic infrastructure, then we've got to operate as we used to without Ontario Hydro, where we basically operate with no profit and we deliver electricity to the consumer at cost. Why? Because it's as important as having a highway or a telephone. You can't do business if you can't travel to the plant, you can't do business if you can't telephone out, and you can't turn on the lights and do the process if you don't have electricity at an affordable price.

I say to the member, hurray for you for having brought forward what I think is a good bill, but shame on your government and shame on your Minister of Energy for continuing down the road of deregulation and privatization that is going to kill jobs across not only northern Ontario but the rest of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I would encourage members to stick to the subject matter of the resolution before us as best they can.

With that, we will have further debate. The Minister of Energy and member for Windsor–St. Clair.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I want to begin by commending the member for Ottawa–Orléans for bringing forward this resolution to help Ontario become a more energy-efficient province. I will direct my comments to the resolution itself after I respond briefly to a number of the, shall we say, less than fulsome points that were made by my colleague opposite.

First of all, prices aren't going up 12%. That's nonsense. That's number one. Last year, your leader said they were going up 40%, and they didn't. They didn't go up 40%; they went down 19%.

Number two, the member forgets quite conveniently that his government cancelled every conservation program in Ontario when they were in power—every one of them.

Then the member contradicts himself. On the one hand, he says we have to pay the full cost of electricity; on the other hand, he says that welfare people in Toronto ought to subsidize big industry. We say no to that. If you use it, you have to pay for it. We are managing it in such a way that we will have an adequate, reliable, safe supply going forward.

Through the efforts of the member for Ottawa–Orléans, Mr. McNeely, this will help encourage and promote conservation. I would urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this private member's resolution. It is because of members like Mr. McNeely from Ottawa–Orléans looking at these types of projects—this particular one happening in Toronto—and making people around the province aware of them that we can in fact move to a culture of conservation. I see that my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke Centre, is here. Her efforts have been absolutely outstanding. She led the conservation action group, and I tell you, Mr.

Speaker, that her efforts and the efforts of a number of other members here in the House will become law and will help us move to a culture of innovation and conservation that ultimately will lead to less expensive electricity bills for consumers.

The other thing that I think needs to be said is that in promoting this type of initiative, what individuals like Mr. McNeely are doing is helping Canada meet its emissions reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. This government believes we ought to reduce CO₂ emissions, because we shouldn't be having smog days in Algonquin Park; we shouldn't be having smog days in Toronto in February. We need to be a leader, not a follower. We need to set the example, not follow the example. Members like Mr. McNeely deserve a lot of credit for helping us address these very specific issues.

This culture of conservation can be built through a number of initiatives similar to what Mr. McNeely talks about. For example, we have announced an ambitious plan to install a smart meter in 800,000 Ontario homes and small businesses by 2007, and in each and every Ontario home and small business by 2010. The Conservatives and the New Democrats oppose that. They want the old way. They want the status quo. They don't want people to be able to manage their bills. They want to perpetrate the myth that they can subsidize electricity prices and do it in a responsible way. The fact is, they can't. The fact is, it is through members like Mr. McNeely pointing out programs of this nature that we get a responsible energy price. That is how we ensure that the constituents of the member for Beaches–East York don't subsidize the price of electricity for large corporations, which I know his leader wants them to do.

So this party's policy and this member talk about the sorts of initiative that can empower people to manage their consumption, to manage their bills, and ultimately to reduce their bills. We hope this Legislature will endorse this. We believe all of you should support it. We certainly support it. I hope we can persuade the Legislature to recognize in a unanimous fashion the work of—and I understand we have leaders like Richard Morris, the manager of the city of Toronto's energy efficiency office, here today, and there is the work of the member for Ottawa–Orléans. We hope you will work with our member on this.

By the way, our new Conservation Bureau will be set up and running fairly soon. It was created under Bill 100. You opposed that. The NDP opposed setting up the conservation office, as did the Conservatives. They opposed it. They voted against it. They're on the record, not once, not twice, but three times. It will be set up, I say to the member for Ottawa–Orléans. This resolution will hopefully have the unanimous consent of the House, and we will give it to the new chief conservation officer. I give you my undertaking, as energy minister, that I will ask the chief conservation officer to make sure we follow up, not only with ideas like this but with the good ideas that are all over the province.

I will be here to vote if there is a vote called on this resolution. I urge members on all sides of the House to support this very progressive and well-informed initiative my colleague has brought forward. I congratulate him. I congratulate those in Toronto who have used this so effectively. I look forward to working with the member for Ottawa—Orléans as we go forward on interesting projects like this and many others. Thanks very much for putting this resolution.

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Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): It's a pleasure for me to be here this morning as well. I want to commend the member for Ottawa—Orléans for bringing forth this initiative. I think it's one that, in general principle, we can all support in this House. Energy conservation is something we all need to pay close attention to as we move forward in the economic future of this province because our rate of growth in the consumption of energy simply can't continue to escalate the way it has in the past number of years, simply because our ability to provide it is certainly compromised.

One of the reasons I want to talk about energy conservation, and also our commitment to the Kyoto accord and all those kinds of things as well—and this kind of initiative is important—is that the ways in which we can reduce those gas emissions, the different ways we can do that, are important for us to achieve those goals both provincially and nationally.

One of the reasons energy conservation is so very important—and I want to commend the city of Toronto for their initiative back in 1996 when they pioneered this program. It has borne great results for businesses in the city and has reduced emissions, but it also has helped a lot of commercial and industrial properties reduce the amount of energy they use, thereby reducing their costs.

Why is energy conservation of such great importance and so urgent right now? Part of it is the policy of this government, poorly thought-out, to shut down our coal plants—boom—in 2007. If they proceed with that without investigating clean coal and some alternatives to shutting them down, we are going to be in one heck of a mess. This spring we're going to shut down Lakeview. That's 500 megawatts. We're talking about 8,000 megawatts that we need to actually close down the coal-fired generating stations. So we're a long way from achieving that goal.

We've talked about an initiative with regard to wind power that is going to produce about 330 megawatts, I believe, and then there's a biomass project that's going to use manure to also produce some energy. Other than that, there's nothing new in the foreseeable future. I think that's something we have to consider very closely before we shut down those coal plants. So this is all about conservation, as you can see.

As to where I believe the province needs to be going, the answer is right in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke: Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. We need to be producing for the future needs of the province, and the future energy needs of Ontario must come with the

nuclear source as our primary baseload. AECL in Chalk River, with 1,900 employees, is state-of-the-art, world-class, a world leader. We have to take a really close look at the advanced Candu reactor for solving the energy needs in the province of Ontario. They've got great people working there. They've had great success internationally.

I am concerned. I've actually heard that this government is looking at a French consortium—Framatome, I believe the name of it is—to buy their nuclear reactors to produce nuclear power in Ontario. I caution the minister and I caution this government and I implore them—we have the best nuclear program in the world in AECL right here in Chalk River, in my riding. That is the source of nuclear power. We have to get the power from them as we solve the energy needs in the province of Ontario.

As I said, getting back directly to the bill of my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans, I do want to commend him. We are going to support this bill. It's something that's been successful in the city of Toronto and it certainly can be successful across the province of Ontario. I know the minister didn't make much of a commitment, other than to send it for more study today, but I think the government does need to fess up with some of that money to make this program work.

One thing I'm very disappointed in with this government and this minister is the cancellation of the Energy Star program for energy-efficient appliances. We bought new appliances while that program was on because we wanted to reduce our energy consumption at home and we also wanted to contribute to the energy conservation programs here in the province of Ontario. Without any warning, just holus-bolus, bam, bam, it's all over, the Minister of Energy cancelled that program. I think that was very negative for the people of Ontario, to cancel that without an alternative in place.

So, as I've said, we're supportive of the bill but there are many, many issues in the energy file that need to be addressed that this government simply isn't doing because, quite frankly, they don't have a plan and they don't know how to get there.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I stand in support of this bill. I stand in support of this bill as a person from Toronto; I'm from the Toronto area. I stand in support of this bill because I have seen how well it has worked in our community. Hopefully, this will spread to be used equally well in other parts of the province.

This is an idea that is a little bit older than people actually understand or realize. It was started by the Toronto energy efficiency office, which was set up as an independent group with the city of Toronto a number of years ago. Its first CEO, its first person in charge, was none other than our own Marilyn Churley. That's really where she got her start, around all of the issues of the environment.

It morphed and it changed in 1996 into the Better Buildings Partnership. The city of Toronto did a very novel thing with infrastructure funds in that year. Whereas many municipalities, including my own municipality of East York, spent money redoing our community centre

and paving some sidewalks and spending money in standard municipal ways, the city of Toronto took \$8 million of the money they got from the federal/provincial partnership and they spent it for a revolving fund, and that revolving fund is the partnership itself: \$8 million, which was given out largely to commercial and industrial establishments. People would make their buildings energy efficient and they would draw from the fund, usually between 10% and 30% of the cost of making the building energy efficient, and then, with the monies that were saved—and it was easy to calculate that because you could see how much your electricity and gas bills and other bills went down—they would reimburse the city of Toronto and the fund back that same amount of money. It took anywhere, on average, from five to eight years for the fund to be replenished. Then that same fund is loaned out to new people who want to make their buildings energy efficient.

I'm not sure where this bill is going with this because the motion is kind of open and I acknowledge that it needs to be open. It doesn't say whether we intend that all municipalities do this in Ontario. If we do so on a per capita basis, that's going to cost the province of Ontario and/or the municipality some \$50 million.

Having said that, we think it's a good idea. If it's for the province to adopt and do the same within its mandate, it's going to cost probably considerably more, since the budget of Ontario is certainly larger than the budgets of even all of the municipalities combined.

1140

Having said that, we think much more needs to be done. We applaud the member in what he is doing, and we will be supporting that. I draw some considerable experience and some considerable knowledge here from the Pembina Institute. I'd like to quote them; it's not that long a quote. According to the Pembina Institute:

"...other jurisdictions in North America are implementing the types of program that will be needed in Ontario to reduce energy dependency. California, for example, has reduced peak power demand by 20%, or 10,000 megawatts, over the past 20 years, with a combination of utility demand-side management programs and building and appliance standards. The study concludes that with an appropriate regulatory foundation in the form of minimum energy efficiency standards and labelling, Ontario Energy Board incentive mechanisms for utilities and improved grid access for cogenerators, major reductions in electricity consumption can be achieved without excessive cost to government or energy consumers or by penalizing low-income members of Ontario society."

The Pembina Institute, the city of Toronto—everyone who is interested in conservation has given us a guideline. This bill will ensure that the city of Toronto's success reaches out and goes to other municipalities and to other governments. We believe this is a good start, but we think there is much more that needs to be done. I am going to send the minister a copy of my speech, perhaps; I hope he will read it.

Even more important than building new energy-producing vehicles such as coal plants, as suggested by the member from Renfrew, or building nuclear devices, as also suggested by him, we believe that the greatest thing this government can do is to exercise energy efficiency, to make things efficient so that we as Ontarians use less electricity. If we can reduce the peak demand by 10%, that's 10% of extra power that we don't have to produce. It's as simple as that: Reduce the demand and you don't have to build the coal-fired generating plants, or you could shut them down. You don't have to rely on nuclear; we can use other forms and safe forms.

The Pembina Institute has listed 20 policies that will get us there. In a few seconds, I'd just like to outline some of those: Energy Star appliances by the year 2010; R2000 in all buildings by the year 2010; energy efficiency requirements under the Planning Act so that municipalities are required in all new buildings to do that; incentives and grants for energy efficiency, for retrofits of buildings; sales rebates on Energy Star appliances; tax credits to industrial energy-efficient equipment; and protection of low-income consumers.

With that, we surely can go on the road to that kind of energy efficiency which will make sure that we will not have brownouts in this province and that the costs will remain low and affordable for industry and consumers alike.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I am pleased to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record to support my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans's Better Buildings Partnership programs. This is an important resolution this morning. I know my colleague from Ottawa-Orléans played a significant role in the development of conservation programs for the city of Ottawa.

When you look at the history of municipalities in Ontario, they have been at the forefront of designing energy conservation programs for their local buildings, because for the longest period of time, municipalities have had the opportunity to have a longer payback when they make investments into energy conservation programs than the private sector. Often the private sector, because they have private shareholders, have this need to have a short payback period of three or four years, whereas municipalities have the luxury of extending that, perhaps to the six- and seven-year area.

I know, in my own municipality of Peterborough, we've had the Peterborough Green-Up going for quite a long period of time. My colleague the member from Etobicoke Centre had an opportunity to visit with the Peterborough Green-Up folks a short time ago and had an appreciation of the energy conservation members, that they've had a place to encourage residents of the Peterborough riding to conserve energy. This can be a program as simple as encouraging people to do energy audits in their own homes, which often come up with some very simple solutions. For example, small loans to encourage the weather-stripping of doors and windows and the acquisition of new doors and windows often can have a dramatic impact on the amount of energy saved. I think it

is important that we push this resolution forward this morning for the sake of Ontario's energy conservation programs.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I appreciate this opportunity to speak in support of the resolution brought forward by the member for Ottawa-Orléans. His resolution states: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should further its energy conservation and emission reduction agenda by taking steps to encourage and support province-wide development of robust better buildings partnership programs, as exemplified by the city of Toronto's highly successful and world-renowned better buildings partnership program."

I am pleased to speak in support of this resolution today on behalf of my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington. I want to first take a moment to speak about the member for Ottawa-Orléans himself. It seems appropriate that this member has chosen to propose the expansion of a partnership program developed here in Toronto, Ontario's largest municipality, to the rest of the province. I understand that the member for Ottawa-Orléans entered the Legislature after a term as city councillor in the amalgamated city of Ottawa, so he enters this place with some degree of municipal experience, which I am sure assists him in his day-to-day responsibilities as an MPP.

I am aware that the member is by profession a civil engineer. This resolution that he's put forward today certainly has an aspect which involves his professional expertise. I haven't yet had the opportunity to get to know the member well. I understand that he and his wife are the proud parents of three sons; we have that in common. I also recall quite vividly his work while serving on council to advocate for assistance for western farmers, with the idea for a program that came to be known as Hay West. For that, he deserves acknowledgement and credit.

I expect that this is the member's first private member's ballot item. I would say that I believe that private members' business is a very important part of our legislative week, because it gives us an opportunity to raise issues that might not otherwise be on the legislative agenda. In my own work as the MPP for Waterloo-Wellington, I have three private member's bills currently before the House.

Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, is intended to ensure the highest possible standards of emergency protection and response in our rural communities, and to ensure that double-hatter firefighters have the right to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time. I continue to raise this issue in the Legislature from time to time, and I commend to the members an article in this month's Municipal World magazine on that particular subject.

Bill 77, the Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act, if passed, would give families a tax break on the purchase of children's booster seats. The bill would correct an inconsistency in the government's tax policy. Currently, car seats for infants and smaller children are exempt from the 8% provincial sales tax, while no exemption is avail-

able for the booster seats for older children that are now being made mandatory by this government. Bill 77 would extend that PST exemption to all seats. This is a modest proposal that will help young families at very little cost to the treasury. I will ask again that the finance minister include this idea in the 2005 provincial budget. These seats are not cheap, and I believe parents, especially those with those with three or more, would benefit from this policy.

Bill 95, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, would prevent the government from establishing any new gaming premises or expanding any existing ones until it appoints a commission under the Public Inquiries Act to study the negative social impacts of excessive gambling and gambling addictions. I am disappointed that the government has sidestepped my bill with its recent announcement to expend \$400 million, a massive amount of money, to entice more gamblers to go to the Windsor Casino. This questionable expenditure—when hospitals need money, when farmers need money, when our post-secondary institutions, our colleges and universities all need money—is very hard for the government to defend. So far, their attempts have been feeble.

All of these issues are important to the people of Waterloo-Wellington, and I'm privileged to voice them today in this House. To return to the specifics of the member's resolution, I would say that there's merit in exploring how we might expand the successful program province-wide, as long as it does not represent down-loading to our local levels of government.

1150

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I am pleased to stand in support of the member from Ottawa-Orléans's resolution in the House.

Obviously, the issue of conservation is critical as an integral part of a strategy for energy for this province, but I think there's a broader issue here as well. The Better Buildings Partnership program was actually started to deal with and focus on CO₂ emissions. It's had great success, and you have to ask yourself why.

It's interesting; greenhouse gas emissions from about 13 million households will be about 72 megatonnes for the year 2004. Space heating accounts for 50% of those emissions and, interestingly enough, hot water heating for 28%. The average home emits about 50% more than an average apartment or condominium. To put that into perspective, along with 46 smog alert days in this province last year, you realize that we really have to do something about CO₂ emissions.

When I was doing some research, one of the most fascinating things I found is that the province that has the highest gross national product is Alberta, and yet farmers from the have-not provinces are actually donating feed to those farmers in Alberta because of their drought situations. The impact and effect of climate change on our economy is significant. In BC, because it's been warmer longer, the beetle is taking a terrible ravage on the forests.

Here in Ontario, we are suffering the same in terms of the number of days of smog and smog-related respiratory disease. When you look at the issue of burning fossil fuels and deforestation and the impact it's having as a whole, then you know you have to look to those solutions.

One of the solutions that has come forward is the Better Buildings initiative because it can be replicated throughout the province, depending on the size of the small town, the city or the municipality that would like to undertake it. The fact is, it generates money and jobs and, at the same time, saves money for institutions, as well as for individual buildings.

I'll give you a couple of examples. The YMCA of Greater Toronto was a \$2-million project. They have \$172,000 a year in savings and their CO₂ reductions were 5,755 tonnes per year. Flip to another side: Toronto Housing Co., \$176,000 in annual savings and a CO₂ reduction of 2,013 tonnes per year. City buildings right across the city: \$570,000 in annual savings.

You can see how that \$132 million so far hasn't been that difficult, and it's anticipated that there will actually be \$3 billion in savings as they follow out in the years to come.

I'd like to just quickly leave you with a quote that comes from Dr. David Suzuki. In essence, Dr. Suzuki has indicated, "The BBP demonstrates the art of the possible—the positive and practical link between the economy and the environment. It's a cause to celebrate, a situation where everybody wins."

I'd like to acknowledge as well Mr. Morris for the work he has done in the city and in being a world leader. I think he gets to travel the world talking to people about his initiatives and what they're doing. Hopefully, that expertise will be translated into the Conservation Bureau and we can move forward with this kind of positive change.

I acknowledge my colleague for bringing this forward, because he knows it can work, from his municipal experience and also from the practical as an engineer. I thank the others for ensuring that this is the type of initiative we will all bring forward.

On the quick side, 394 megawatts of new renewable energy has been put into this province—\$700 million into this economy. This is a whole new world out here, a place where we can save and, at the same time, be prosperous.

I would be delighted to sit down with some of the members who are not really aware of the number of initiatives that we have out there and help them to understand what is actually happening in this province.

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton—Lawrence): I just want to echo the comments of the member from Waterloo—Wellington, how important private members' business is, especially when some of us get maybe two minutes every two weeks to speak. So I'll try and use my two minutes wisely here. There has got to be something wrong with a system that does that. I think we should fix that.

I just want to say that the member from Ottawa—Orléans has a pretty simple and straight winner economically and environmentally. What it means is that there is a revolving fund set up whereby monies that are put in the revolving fund can be used by small business, large buildings, by non-profits or by governments that want to use some of that money to retrofit their buildings to make them more energy-efficient so they save money. With the money they save, they repay that fund. That's the essence of it and that's why in Toronto's fund, they've actually increased the value of the fund by \$1 million, up to \$9 million.

I think what the member from Orléans is saying is that we should do this on a province-wide basis. It is something that has to be done, not only for the environmental reasons, but I think there are all kinds of opportunities to make our buildings more energy-smart. It will also create employment opportunities for all kinds of energy-saving industries and conservation industries, which I think are the new cutting edge for employment in the future in all of Ontario.

It is a very astute proposal that the member puts forward, and I think, as the Minister of Energy said, these are the kinds of proposals we need to look at seriously. I think from the Minister of Finance's perspective, it's something we are taking a good, hard look at because anything that essentially improves the financial climate and can save some money at the same time, that doesn't really cost any money out of the budget, makes economic and environmental sense. I applaud the member from Orléans for this intelligent initiative.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. McNeely, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. McNeely: I want to start by thanking the honourable members who spoke to this resolution.

To the member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, I'd just like to say that MUSH has been done pretty well. The municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—that's been done. Those are the groups that have looked at this. I think that with oil at \$50 a barrel, they'd have to go back and look at it again.

I'll ignore the member from Timmins—James Bay.

I want to thank the Minister of Energy for supporting me so well and for correcting the record that was put in a very non-partisan way at this time.

The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke was supportive, and I thank him for that.

The member for Beaches—East York knows probably more about this issue than I do, and certainly I thank you for your words. But I would like to correct part of the statement that the city of Toronto spends about \$700,000 on its program now. That's what it costs the city, I believe. That saves \$20 million in energy and creates all those jobs. So the city has taken that on in a responsible fashion. And the federal government has identified \$225 million in the five-year budget that just came out for retrofitting buildings. So, hopefully, that money doesn't have to come from our cities and our municipalities but

will come from the two senior levels of government. It is a loan, in a way.

I want to thank the member for Waterloo—Wellington for his kind words, the member for Etobicoke Centre for all the work she's been doing in energy conservation in this province—I thank you for that—and the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, who mentioned that this is going to be considered in the budget—that's very important to me—that it's going to be considered by finance. So I thank everyone for their kind words.

I'd just like to read one thing here. It's from Robert Kennedy's book: "A one-mile-per-gallon improvement in gas mileage would yield double the oil that could ever be extracted from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," and would do it without destroying the country's last great wilderness. So I think that's a good way to end this today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allowed for private members' public business has now expired.

VQA WINE STORES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES MAGASINS DE VINS DE LA VINTNERS QUALITY ALLIANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 53, standing in the name of Mr. Hudak. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I move that the bill be sent to the general government committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the bill be sent to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

BETTER BUILDINGS PARTNERSHIP

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 54, standing in the name of Mr. McNeely.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been dealt with, I do leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KEMPTVILLE DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): With great pride, I wish to share with the House an announcement made earlier this week by the Lean on Me fundraising campaign for the expansion of the Kemptville District Hospital. In less than nine months, the good people of North Grenville, one of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario, have contributed over \$4 million.

The efforts of the fundraising committee and the support of the community for this outstanding small hospital are nothing short of phenomenal. On Monday, Ken Mews, chair of the hospital board, said that a \$1.36-million pledge by the municipality of North Grenville had pushed the total raised to over \$4 million, close to 50% of the total cost.

The expansion will produce modern emergency, outpatient and diagnostic units from 12,000 square feet of new space and 15,000 square feet of renovated area. Last year, there were more than 30,000 ER and outpatient visits to the hospital—a demand that has increased by about 65% in three years. The current emergency department is cramped and split up, and utilizes halls as treatment areas, yet the hospital under its terrific administrator, Lynne Budgell, continues to receive high praise for both patient care and financial efficiency.

The citizens of North Grenville have shown their commitment. Now it's time for the Minister of Health to approve the plans languishing at the ministry and allocate the funding for this desperately needed expansion. Get on with the job.

TECHNOLOGY DAY IN MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I rise to recognize Technology Day in the city of Mississauga. This Friday, March 4, the city of Mississauga will celebrate 30 years of technology excellence by showcasing its leading-edge information technology initiatives at Tech Day 2005. City of Mississauga staff will demonstrate more than two dozen projects, each one supporting Mississauga's service delivery needs and benefiting the city's 680,000 residents.

By the end of the year, or earlier, Mississauga residents will be able to use the new Connect 2 Rec system to register for courses and activities on-line—24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Recruiting Web software will help the city of Mississauga attract the best applicants for career opportunities. The event will also showcase Mississauga eStore. This initiative allows the purchase of souvenirs, transit passes, business directories and the download of tax and compliance certificates on-line.

These are only a few of the many technology-based initiatives that will soon provide Mississauga residents with better access to the information they need, whenever and wherever they need it.

The city's existing municipal Web site is one of the best of its kind. As a former Web developer and still a weekend dot-net code hack, I appreciate not only its intuitive functionality but the clean design and its good writing.

I congratulate the city of Mississauga and join them in celebrating 30 years of technology excellence in Ontario's best-managed city.

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Another step was recently taken on the road to Hamilton's economic vision of success. McMaster President Peter George, named today as the winner of this year's CH-Hamilton Safe Communities Spirit of the Community Award, demonstrated leadership and innovation by finalizing a purchase of an old appliance manufacturing site in west Hamilton known locally as the Camco site.

In 1912, George Westinghouse turned electrical manufacturing into Hamilton's second-largest industry. Today, the strategic and visible location will be the dynamic new research park where Mamdouh Shoukri, McMaster's vice-president of research, said that the park complements the university's wide-ranging research by creating the opportunity to collaborate with government and industry: "The possibilities of expanding the intellectual and financial capital for Hamilton are absolutely endless."

The future is Hamilton's. We are building it together. McMaster University was named Canada's Research University of the Year by RESEARCH Infosource and has world-renowned faculty and state-of-the-art research facilities. McMaster's culture of innovation fosters a commitment to discovery and learning in teaching, research and scholarship. We are immensely proud of the leadership demonstrated by McMaster University.

GENERAL MOTORS OF CANADA

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate General Motors, its workers and its partners on reinvesting \$2.5 billion in the Canadian auto sector. This announcement includes agreements with the provincial and federal governments and will strengthen automotive engineering, research and development, and manufacturing capabilities in Ontario and Canada. This project will include new vehicle programs, enhanced vehicle engineering activities, flex manufacturing, environmental leadership, employment and skills training, and a new Canadian automotive innovation network.

This government's financial commitment builds on the commitment the previous government made to the auto sector in our province, and will enhance the skilled workforce in Oshawa and other GM cities in Ontario. Yesterday's reinvestment from General Motors will bring more high-tech engineering jobs to Ontario and, of course, my riding of Oshawa.

Today General Motors of Canada makes more automotive supply purchases than any other automotive manufacturer in Canada. Together with Ontario and the federal government, the company will create a new automotive centre of excellence at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology to better link participating automotive companies, suppliers, universities, researchers and students in the area of automotive innovation and technology.

I would like to thank General Motors and the hard work of the CAW and the other partners for their continued commitment and confidence in our local community in the province of Ontario.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have been intrigued by the provincial Liberal government's attack against the federal Liberals for not getting the kind of money and support they want. I recall that in 1990, when the NDP was in government, I couldn't remember Brother McGuinty at the time or other brother Liberals saying to the NDP and Bob Rae, "We're right behind you, Bob. We need to go after the federal Liberals because they've slashed our support for welfare programs and for post-secondary education."

I certainly didn't expect Brother Harris to be on my side, but where were the sisters and brothers, Lyn McLeod and Dalton McGuinty, at a time when the federal Tories and Liberals slashed our support, at a time when the economy was not doing very well? We were in a recession, and what we had from Harris and Brother McGuinty and Sister Lyn McLeod was something to the effect of, "NDPers do not have a revenue problem, they've got a spending problem," they used to say.

I don't remember Brother Harris or Brother McGuinty saying, "We need to help you, NDP." Now they've adopted a different approach. Now, with a good economy, they refuse to use the tools they have at their disposal to get the money they need to fund post-secondary, social programs and our health care system. They're whining and whimpering like little children saying, "The federal Liberal government is not giving us money." Their response is, "We're going to be robust and muscular in attacking the federal Liberals, and if they don't give us what we want, we're going to whine and whine and whimper and whimper," and on and on.

HOURS OF WORK

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased today to speak about our government's commitment to fair labour practices in Ontario. The Employment Standards Amendment Act, which came into effect on Tuesday, ends the Conservatives' 60-hour workweek. In the recent past, governments have skewed labour legislation in favour of one side or the other. I'm proud to be part of a government that has made it a point to find a balance in labour legislation.

The act balances employees' rights and employer concerns. It will let employees choose whether to work more hours or to spend that time finding a balance between work and their personal lives. For businesses, it ensures they have the flexibility necessary to compete in today's global economy. The act protects employees by allowing them to decide without undue pressure whether or not to work extra hours. At the same time, it recognizes the

need for longer hours of work in some workplaces. It also makes sure employees know their rights and that their employer understands their obligations. Finally, there is going to be tougher enforcement against those who refuse to operate responsibly, preying on workers and undermining competitors.

The end of the 60-hour workweek is another step our government has taken to strengthen Ontario's greatest competitive advantage, our people, and I want to commend Minister Bentley for his leadership on this issue.

1340

ACQUIRED DEAF-BLINDNESS

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I rise on behalf of Ontarians with acquired deaf-blindness who are being discriminated against by this Liberal government, which is denying them funding for their needed intervener and interpreter services.

In December of last year, the Ministry of Community and Social Services received a report from Cathexis Consulting, which conducted a review of these services in our province. The report found that while those Ontarians who are born with deaf-blindness have their services fully funded, many others, such as seniors who acquire deaf-blindness during their lifetime, receive no funding at all. The December report urges the Ministry of Community and Social Services to engage the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in the development of a fair and equitable intervener service system that takes into account the increasing number of acquired deaf-blind individuals in an aging population, with their changing needs.

The rights of deaf persons to access services are already recognized in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, and the Human Rights Code. I call on the McGuinty Liberals to end this insensitive discrimination against Ontarians with acquired deaf-blindness, ensure their accessibility rights as already mandated in the ODA, and act immediately on the recommendations of their own report to create an equitable system with adequate funding for those with acquired deaf-blindness in Ontario.

EPILEPSY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): March is Epilepsy Awareness Month. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder. It's a physical condition which causes sudden bursts of electrical energy in the brain. These electrical discharges produce sudden, brief seizures which vary from one person to another in frequency.

Epilepsy is not a disease, it is not a psychological disorder, and it's not contagious. My constituency assistant, Nancy Clark, has epilepsy. She can remember having her first grand mal seizure in high school and the feelings of uncertainty in not knowing when another seizure might occur. At that time, epilepsy was an unspoken subject. Nancy's parents referred to her seizures as fainting spells. She is currently seizure-free, and has

been for many years. She is extremely grateful for the milestones she has experienced.

More research and education have to be done. Epilepsy Ontario is a registered non-profit organization that is dedicated to promoting information, awareness, support services, advocacy, education and research. As March is Epilepsy Awareness Month, Epilepsy Ontario has launched the lavender ribbon campaign. I hope Ontarians can learn more about epilepsy during this month and learn to break down the number of myths and misconceptions that surround the disorder.

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent for the wearing of lavender ribbons in this House during the month of March.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent to wear the ribbon in March? Agreed.

Mr. Flynn: If I might just note that these will be available from the staff in the government House leader's office.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about this government's growth strategy: Bill 136, Places to Grow. Our government is dedicated to ensuring that Ontario grows in a positive way, ensuring prosperous, healthy and diverse communities in all parts of the province.

Guelph is one of the targeted areas. If Guelph continues to grow as we have in the past, we will consume an area nearly twice the size of present-day Toronto over the next 30 years. Gridlock will intensify, commuting times will increase, we will experience a loss of economically valuable prime agricultural lands, and higher levels of greenhouse gas emissions will result.

This is why the McGuinty government has introduced Places to Grow. We understand our responsibility to Ontarians. Ontarians deserve well-planned communities where they can live, work and play. I know that people in Guelph are as excited about the plan as I am—people like Guelph Councillor David Birtwistle, head of the municipality's key planning, environment and transportation committee. He told the Guelph Mercury: "I certainly agree with it. It's a step in the right direction." Councillor Maggie Laidlaw said, "This is certainly going the way we're supposed to be going."

Even the opposition thinks we are doing a good job. Here is what Tim Hudak said yesterday: "I think the minister has been careful in his thinking about the growth plan in this legislation." On this occasion, I agree with Mr. Hudak.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSUMER REPORTING
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LES RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT
LE CONSOMMATEUR

Mr. Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act / Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Ruprecht?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Hardly a day goes by without learning of a sad story of someone being charged exorbitant car or home insurance fees, of someone not getting employment because of their lowered score, of someone not getting an emergency loan or of someone being denied a mortgage. This bill deals with this issue plus that of identity theft, of what to do when an identity theft has occurred.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(NO CONVEYING OF PASSENGERS FOR
COMPENSATION), 2005LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DE LA ROUTE (AUCUN TRANSPORT
DE PASSAGERS MOYENNANT
RÉMUNÉRATION)

Mr. Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to restrict the conveyance of passengers for compensation / Projet de loi 175, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour restreindre le transport de passagers moyennant rémunération.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Jackson?

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This bill makes it a provincial offence under the Highway Traffic Act to convey passengers anywhere in Ontario in a motor vehicle for compensation, or to pick up passengers anywhere in Ontario for the purposes of conveying them somewhere in a motor vehicle for compensation, unless the driver of the motor vehicle and its owner or lessee are licensed under the municipal bylaw passed under section 150 of the Municipal Act, 2001.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'm honoured to rise in the House today to share great news with the people of Ontario. It is very clear that our government is implementing a new approach to create a strong Ontario economy for today and for tomorrow. It's an approach that builds on partnership and collaboration to create the world's best workforce, a workforce that is highly skilled, highly flexible and highly innovative, a workforce that will attract more good jobs for the people of this great province.

Look at our auto industry, for instance. When we first took office, we heard doom-and-gloom predictions about the future of the industry. We heard that there wouldn't be any growth or any investment. Over the last year, we have proven that wrong. Our government got creative, and we started thinking outside the box and established the Ontario automotive investment strategy. Since its launch less than a year ago, over 20,000 jobs in the automotive sector have been sustained and over \$3.6 billion of new investment has come to Ontario's automotive sector. With innovation, collaboration and partnership, Ford of Canada took Ontario's \$100-million investment and turned it into the \$1-billion Project Centennial in Oakville. It's a plan that means thousands of high-value jobs are here to stay.

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And yesterday we built on that success. In partnership with General Motors of Canada and the federal government, the Premier announced Ontario's investment in the \$2.5-billion Beacon project. This is Canada's single largest automotive investment in the history of the automotive sector. It is an investment in our greatest natural resource, our people. Through Beacon, we will train the next generation of automotive workers. Three Ontario universities and three Ontario colleges are part of this innovative education plan.

We know that the only way we're going to stay competitive and reach our economic potential is by working together. Thanks to creative thinking, our ability to collaborate and a commitment to innovation in auto manufacturing, GM's community of highly skilled workers will continue building vehicles for today and for years to come. Our investment will support expansions and vehicle design manufacturing capabilities at GM plants right across this province: in Oshawa, in Ingersoll, in St. Catharines. This is great news for the thousands of workers and their families who will benefit from new and secure jobs at General Motors. It's great news for all of us, because a strong auto industry means a strong Ontario economy. It means that people can take pride in their work and be optimistic about the future. This is the

Ontario that this government believes in. This is the Ontario that we are working hard to create.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): As you know, the McGuinty government remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation in our province with cleaner sources of energy. We're setting the pace as the only jurisdiction in North America that is committed to replacing coal-fired generation. We are doing this because we are committed to protecting the best interests of Ontarians by reducing harmful emissions and cleaning up the air we breathe.

As we move to cleaner sources of power to replace coal-fired generation, we will eliminate up to 35 million tonnes of harmful greenhouse gas emissions, which will go a long way to helping Ontario and Canada meet our commitments under the Kyoto accord. There's no doubt that this is an extremely challenging goal. But when there's challenge, there's opportunity, and we believe we have an opportunity to find long-term solutions that will not only keep our lights on but also reduce the environmental footprint we leave for future generations.

I believe that as we move forward toward bringing on newer and cleaner electricity supply, we must leverage every opportunity we can to power our province with clean hydroelectric power, such as the power that's been generated at Niagara Falls since 1922. At one point in our history, the Falls met the majority of Ontario's needs. But today it represents only a fraction of what we will need to meet the looming gap between supply and demand in the province.

The good news, as we contemplate our electricity supply challenges, is that there is an abundance of clean, untapped hydroelectric potential in our country to help us meet our long-term needs. Manitoba and Quebec both have tremendous hydroelectric resources that could be developed if the appropriate infrastructure were in place. There is also a very sizable project at the lower Churchill River that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador has been contemplating. Even here in Ontario, our northern rivers and streams hold tremendous potential, according to studies dating back almost 30 years. That's why this government is interested in building an east-west grid with our neighbours and our Canadian brothers and sisters. We want to work together with them to share the bountiful resources we have with one another, so that we can lessen the need to import energy from coal from our US neighbours. In the information age we find ourselves in, we believe that a transmission infrastructure that runs from east to west can be the railway of the 21st century.

The McGuinty government has already taken the lead on the concept of an east-west power grid by initiating discussions with Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador about reinforcing and expanding our interconnections with each other. Through these interconnections, we estimate that we would be able to tap

into as much as 3,000 megawatts of additional power when it's needed.

In fact, we are actively studying a proposed hydroelectric power project in northern Manitoba and a transmission line that would bring clean hydroelectric power to our province. The project represents a sustainable power supply arrangement known as the clean energy transfer initiative, perhaps more commonly known as Conawapa. Clean energy from Manitoba has the potential to provide Ontarians with 1,500 megawatts of hydroelectric power, which would fuel over one million homes and go a long way to helping us solve some of our long-term supply issues. This \$5.5-billion project would also contribute tremendous employment and economic opportunities in Ontario and Manitoba, particularly in northern and First Nation communities, where economic development is needed most.

However, in order to make Conawapa a reality, we're going to need to see a significant contribution from the federal government to help bridge the long distances from where the power is generated in northern Manitoba to where it's needed in communities and industries across Ontario. Our government is encouraged to see that the federal government is taking a great interest in the long-term potential of an east-west grid. In the recent federal budget, Minister Goodale referenced the east-west power grid as a possible project under a new \$1-billion Clean Fund that has been created. He has also announced a new \$250-million partnership fund, created to underpin the federal government's commitment to work with provinces and territories to meet climate change objectives. The federal government has also indicated that this could grow to up to \$2.3 billion over 10 years. I've written to Minister Goodale to express our government's interest in meeting with him to discuss projects such as the clean energy transfer initiative and to discuss other ways that the federal government can help our province to meet Canada's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and clean up our air.

Our Premier firmly believes that the development of an east-west grid would enhance our energy security, help clean up our environment, stimulate economic development in our north and provide a renewable, reliable and affordable supply of electricity for all Canadians for generations to come. The McGuinty government will continue to play a lead role in this exciting new development, and we look forward to working with the federal government and our neighbours to the east and west to make this vision a reality.

Cleaner power, less expensive power, economic development for our First Nations: This is the kind of initiative that all of us in this country can benefit from, and we're proud to lead the way on the east-west grid.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I am delighted to rise in the House to speak about a priority of our government:

helping our young people acquire the skills and experience they will need for the future. Today, I am pleased to announce that the McGuinty government will invest over \$50 million in the Ontario summer jobs program to help more than 57,000 students find work this summer. The program provides a range of services, along with a \$2-per-hour wage support for businesses and community organizations to hire young people so they can gain valuable work experience.

It is challenging for students to make decisions about careers and further education and training. It is also challenging for students to get their first job. The Ontario summer jobs program helps students with their job searches and provides support to improve their marketing skills. It also provides high school, college and university students with an opportunity to find rewarding and productive summer work.

1400

Students who are just beginning their job searches can access services through community-based colleges and youth employment agencies in more than 100 sites in 80 communities across the province. They can call the toll-free JobGrow hotline at 1-888-JOB-GROW to find the location of the organization closest to them for help in finding a job or even starting a career.

Creating summer businesses is also an important part of the Ontario summer jobs program. Students might wish to start their own summer business through the Summer Company, a component of the program which is offered by my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. This initiative provides hands-on business coaching and mentoring by local community business leaders. It is a great opportunity for enterprising young people to experience what it would be like to start and run their own business.

Starting a business or learning from others in the workplace are important experiences for young people. That is why the Ontario summer jobs program provides students with a wide range of employment opportunities. Through the summer experience component of the program, for example, students can work as Ontario Rangers, an initiative that is offered by my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources. The rangers work in wilderness camps, maintaining trails, parks and camp buildings, as well as helping in fish and wildlife projects.

All of these programs help students learn about the job market, explore potential careers and expand their job skills. We believe that our youth are the future of our province. By making investments like this one, we are helping students pursue opportunities that could contribute to their future success. Through these opportunities, our young people will have the chance to participate in various aspects of Ontario's economy. In so doing, we can help to ensure that our young people will see Ontario as part of their future and proudly see themselves as having the potential to be strong contributors to Ontario's prosperity.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Yesterday was another historic day for Oshawa and one of its key partners, General Motors and its dedicated workers. This is very similar to decades ago, when Oshawa council agreed to that first \$50,000 interest-free loan that brought Colonel Sam McLaughlin and General Motors Canada to Oshawa.

Yesterday's \$2.5-billion announcement not only gives worldwide recognition to the quality, hard work and dedication of those GM workers who produce the number one plant in the world, but also moves GM in Oshawa and its workers to the world forefront as leaders in auto design engineering.

Yesterday's announcement includes a \$23-million investment for St. Catharines' new fuel-saving 5.3-litre V8 displacement-on-demand engine that will link assembly to Oshawa, as well as establishing an automotive engineering centre at McMaster, and over \$500 million being invested in Ingersoll, creating over 400 net new jobs there.

To quote Michael Grimaldi, the president of GM Canada, "In total, this represents the largest and most comprehensive automotive investment in Canadian history," including a new virtual reality centre and new investments to support GM's worldwide fuel cell research and development.

Along with McMaster, new automotive centres of excellence are to be established at Oshawa's University of Ontario Institute of Technology, the University of British Columbia, University of Waterloo, Université de Sherbrooke, McGill, École polytechnique de Montréal, Université du Québec, Institut national de la recherche scientifique, and AUTO21. This new auto innovation network will bring all players together in moving Canada's auto innovation even farther ahead.

Again, I want to thank all partners: General Motors, the universities involved, the federal and provincial governments, and of course the hard and dedicated work of the CAW workers who make the difference and are producing the quality necessary to move forward for future generations of quality in the auto sector. Great things continue to happen in Oshawa.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased to respond today to the statement by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Summer jobs provide students across the province with the opportunity to learn valuable skills that will help them when they enter the workforce on a full-time basis. I know the province has for many years actively promoted opportunities for youth to gain valuable experience and perhaps to save a little for their post-secondary education. It's important for those students already pursuing their life dreams and for those still in high school who are trying to save for their education.

From 1995 to 2003, under the former government, the number of youth who found placement through Ontario summer jobs soared from about 24,000 to more than 60,000 in 2003. The program was part of the former Tory government's youth opportunities Ontario strategy, which provided more than 175,000 jobs and services to youth in 2002-03.

Over the past several months, the minister has been making a series of announcements detailing a little bit of money here and a little bit of money there, but what is surprising to me is something that the minister hasn't been doing. She hasn't been telling the people of Ontario what her government's plans are regarding the implementation and recommendations coming out of the Rae review. Since the results of the review were made public, there has been a deafening silence, not just from the minister but in fact from the entire government. This is a report they asked for. They were regularly briefed while the review was under way and yet, since it has been released, they've done their best to ignore it.

As the report made clear, we have to have a well-educated population in order to ensure the continued prosperity of our province. Post-secondary education is critical to our future. The Premier said he is the education Premier, and yet nothing has been done or said in response to the report except that the Premier has confirmed that tuition will rise. I notice he didn't make any reference to the caveats Mr. Rae placed on what changes had to accompany any rise in tuition.

I guess we'll have to wait for the provincial budget to get a sense of how committed this government is to responding to the recommendations in the report. We don't know what direction the government is going to go in. Colleges and universities don't know what the government will do with this report, and students don't know how this government will respond to the issue of tuition and all the other things that are important to their obtaining a quality education that will prepare them for the future.

I think it is a good thing that the government is continuing to support the work of past governments in providing opportunities to help students prepare themselves for the workforce and to save to further their education. But I also think it is important that the government tell us just exactly what they're planning to do with the Rae report.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to get up and respond to the statement by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on the auto sector. I have to say that we in this party certainly believe that helping the auto sector is absolutely the right thing to do. What the NDP has advocated for, quite frankly, for many years is exactly this kind of thing announced today.

We say it's about time that the federal and provincial governments stepped up to the plate when it comes to

these kinds of investments. Hats off to GM for this significant investment and congratulations to Oshawa for being the top efficiency plant in North America. It's great that there's going to be a net gain of 500 jobs and major investments in plant retooling and modernization. All those things are absolutely wonderful. Two new vehicles are to be assembled in Oshawa. New Democrats are certainly not going to be raining on this parade.

When the auto sector does well, we all know that the economy does well. As Rosario was talking about in his statement, the NDP led in the early 1990s with a comprehensive auto strategy. That major investment kept the economy ticking during the dark days of the early 1990s. It kick-started the economy back into a recovery that led Ontario out of its recession.

We're really pleased to see that this key sector of Ontario's economy is getting the assistance it is. We commend the Canadian Auto Workers for driving this strategy over a period of years and benefiting their members. Auto is responsible for one in six jobs in our province, and naturally we support sustaining this crucial industry.

I have to tell you, though, that as the member for Hamilton East, I have to ask for an expansion of this type of proactive approach to the unveiling of an Ontario steel investment strategy. Right now, of course, steel is the very raw product that feeds the auto industry. Steel feeds auto and auto needs steel.

As you know, there have been some serious concerns in my own community around a major steel manufacturer. It has been under bankruptcy protection and just the other day rejected all the suitors that came making offers. The workers are still very uncertain about their futures and their pensions. The company still owes more than \$1 billion to its pension plan. There is a continuation of high market prices for steel right now, but who knows how long that's going to last? Quite frankly, right now, 14 months after going into CCAA protection, we're back to square one, really, in terms of the restructuring of the steel plant in Hamilton. And this is only one plant. Many smaller steel plants have already been closed in Ontario. Why? Because there is no steel strategy offered by this government. The McGuinty Liberals are missing in action when it comes to a steel strategy. There is no sector strategy to help the modernization of our steel plants and there really should be. A strong Ontario economy is an integrated one, where we make the steel that we use to build the cars.

1410

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Energy today. I wonder why the Minister of Energy gave a lengthy statement when the only thing that is really important in the statement is that he is going to write a letter to the federal Minister of Finance to talk to him about federal money.

This is a government that announces—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'd like to hear the leader of the third party's response and I started to hear some heckling. Order.

Mr. Hampton: This is a government that keeps announcing its interest in an east-west transmission line for hydroelectricity—announcing it, reannouncing it, reannouncing it—but nothing seems to be happening, except the minister uses today to say that he is going to write a letter to the minister in Ottawa.

It's amazing how many positions the McGuinty government can have. I want to read for you something from Hansard: "We now know it's cheaper to produce this electricity in the province than it is to buy it from Manitoba. We now know that if we produce it here"—meaning Ontario—"we're going to create some 19,791 jobs. In addition, we now know that if we cancel the deal today, it's going to cost us \$82 million, but if we wait until the end of the environmental assessment hearing, it's going to cost us over \$200 million."

This was all said in opposition to an east-west transmission line. Who said that? The Liberal energy critic, on April 30, 1992, Dalton McGuinty.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The minister announces help for summer students. I think it's a nice thing, but this is what would be better: for her to announce that she will provide the \$1.6 billion that Bob Rae recommended in his post-secondary review. I expect Brother Sorbara and Brother McGuinty to come up with the money to help summer students and all students for the next couple of years to come. I'm anticipating that recommendation to come soon. I thank you, Brother Sorbara.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Two days ago, the Minister of Finance said he couldn't recall who was at the swanky, high-priced fundraiser at his brother's home or what was discussed. Yesterday, one of the developers at the Sorbara fundraiser went public, confirming Premier McGuinty made promises to developers at the Sorbara home in exchange for \$10,000 donations to the Ontario Liberal Party. Again yesterday, the Minister of Finance said he couldn't recall the details, as he has been to over 150 similar Liberal soirees. Today, however, Mr. Sorbara has changed his story. He is quoted as saying "the greenbelt was not a significant topic of discussion" at this fundraiser.

Minister, given Mr. Sorbara's apparently unreliable memory, can you assure us today that no additional

promises were made by your Premier to developers regarding the greenbelt boundaries?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): What I can tell you is that the greenbelt plan that was put into place earlier this month is based on science developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture. It's based on good planning. It's based on the official plans of the municipalities involved, and it's something that generations are going to benefit from for many, many years to come.

All I can tell you is that I was not at the particular meeting to which reference has been made. The first that I knew about that was when the letter became public last week. But I can tell you that generations to come will benefit from the greenbelt plan that we put into place earlier this year.

Mr. Runciman: By refusing to answer the question, the minister encourages the sense that it's based on good funding rather than good planning.

I have a copy of the Minister of Finance's disclosure statement made under the Members' Integrity Act. Minister Sorbara's disclosure shows he had interest in several development companies owned and controlled by the Sorbara family. One such company controls Sorbara Holding Corp., Sorbara Services Ltd. and has interests in Beaton Meadows Limited Partnership, to name just a few. The Sorbara family is well known as a large developer. They own major pieces of land around the greenbelt. Minister, my question is straightforward: To the best of your knowledge, how much of the land owned by the Sorbara family companies borders the greenbelt?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: In our campaign platform last year, we promised to put over 600,000 acres into a greenbelt for the protection of future generations, for the protection of good agricultural land and for the protection of sensitive environmental land. The plan we delivered on earlier this week in effect puts a million acres of land, in addition to the 800,000 acres that are already protected under the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment plan. What we did was for the good of the province of Ontario and was for future generations to come. It was to curb the sprawl and the gridlock that that party did absolutely nothing about during the eight years they were in office.

Mr. Runciman: Again I asked a straightforward question and got the company line. Surely it's no surprise to you to know that development companies controlled by the Sorbara family own and control significant plots of land south of the greenbelt boundaries. This is the same area where you have lifted all restrictions for new development, despite recent assurances from Minister Caplan that this wouldn't happen.

We know that Premier McGuinty and Minister Sorbara were hosted by Ed Sorbara, a developer himself, at this \$10,000-a-person Liberal fundraiser. One developer in attendance has already gone public stating that the Premier was making promises. We also know that Rob MacIsaac, the chair of your Greenbelt Task Force,

said that his group did not draw the lines. He told developers to talk to the Premier's office about boundaries. Minister, can you guarantee that the boundary lines of your greenbelt were not drawn in such a way as to exempt lands owned by the Sorbara family?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I have no knowledge as to who owns what land where. We drew the lines with respect to the greenbelt based on our campaign promise that set out a certain area in the GTA as the area of the greenbelt that should be protected. Then, following the election in which we were successful, we wanted to implement that plan, and we went to the best science that was available from the Ministry of Natural Resources, from the Ministry of Agriculture, from the planning documentation that each one of the municipalities had, and that's how the greenbelt was established, without any knowledge as to who owned what particular land, either in or out of the greenbelt.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question?

Mr. Runciman: The minister talks about science, but unfortunately they've failed to release any scientific basis for the arbitrary greenbelt boundaries. The only evidence we have as to how the lines were drawn are the words of—

The Speaker: To whom are you addressing the question?

Mr. Runciman: To you, Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, it's a new question.

Mr. Runciman: Minister, the only evidence we have as to how the lines were drawn is the words of a developer who paid \$10,000 to the Ontario Liberal Party. That developer says the Premier made promises and the Premier's office drew the lines. We now know that the Sorbara group of companies has lands outside the greenbelt boundaries. When your government first announced a greenbelt, Minister Caplan said that lands immediately outside would not be allowed to develop unless certain intensification targets were met by municipalities. Now that requirement has mysteriously disappeared. Developers have been given the green light and lands are free to be developed. If you can't explain who drew the lines, can you tell us who changed the rules?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'll refer that question to the Minister of Public Infrastructure.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to be very clear to this member that what you have suggested is absolutely false. Nothing has fallen off the table. A 40% intensification target, as your own critic indicated in response to Bill 136 debate yesterday, is still very much on the table. We are working with municipalities, we are working with the industry, we are working with environmentalists and we are working with Ontarians in order to develop and grow in a way in which you did not have the courage and the guts to do. So you can take your allegations and you can stuff them, because they are not true, sir.

1420

The Speaker: I think that was quite unparliamentary. I'd like you to stand up and withdraw.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I withdraw.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: In the past, we have accused the government of drawing up their plans on the back of a napkin. Now it appears you're drawing up your plans on the back of a \$10,000 cheque.

We see that lands controlled by the Sorbara family are outside the greenbelt. These same lands were only to be developed if nearby municipalities achieved intensification targets first. Now that the final boundaries are released, we see the exact opposite. Despite your comments, that doesn't stand up to scrutiny. Your ministry says that these lands can now be developed at will, without restriction: free rein. Minister, will you or your colleague now release the science involved, if there is any, to prove why Sorbara family lands were excluded from the greenbelt?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: There is no foundation for the allegations that the member makes. Nothing has dropped off; in fact, it's been strengthened. We have listened through town halls. In fact, we've released four technical papers dealing with intensification as outlined by Urban Strategies, dealing with land supply, population, employment distribution and urban growth centres. I would suggest that the member take a look at the public infrastructure renewal ministry Web site, and he will find the science available there, as it is available to all members of the public. I regret that this member just doesn't want to be confused by the facts.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Pursuing the line of questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, there are some very clear facts. We have a developer who is saying that the Premier's office drew the boundaries. The chair of your Greenbelt Task Force, Mayor MacIsaac, says that he didn't draw the boundaries; in fact, he's ducking for cover, and he's pointing his finger squarely at the government.

We have a Minister of Municipal Affairs who refuses to answer very basic questions about the developer in question here today. For weeks, we've been demanding to see the science behind these boundaries, and for weeks our envelopes have remained empty: not a single science report, not a single LEAR report brought forward. It's clear how these decisions were made. We can drag this out day by day by day, or will you agree to release the science finally today and come clean? Release the science, Minister.

The Speaker: Minister of Public and Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As has already been indicated, the science is readily available on the ministry Web site and it has been for some time. The science is available there.

Getting back to Mayor MacIsaac's comments, it is true—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Just listen for a moment. It is true that originally, when our campaign document was put together, obviously lines were drawn as to what area we would want to protect as a greenbelt. After we won the election, we took a look at that area around the GTA and applied the science to that area to see if we could justify everything that was within the greenbelt. It is totally justifiable from both an agricultural and a natural resource viewpoint. There is no question about that. I would advise the member to take a look at our Web site, and he can see the science right there.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier. As you are no doubt aware, the Premier and the Minister of Finance were hosts of a small, secret fundraising dinner last May, when the greenbelt boundaries were being determined. Guests, many connected with the development industry, paid \$10,000 each. That huge fee bought them access to the Premier, the finance minister and the minister's brother, Ed Sorbara. On TVOntario's Fourth Reading last Friday, we saw a letter with the names of those guests. One of those guests, developer Silvio De Gasperis, has alleged that at the dinner he secured an agreement to exempt land he owns from the greenbelt and thereby benefit.

Will you confirm today that Neil Rodgers of the developers' lobby, the Urban Development Institute, was also at this secret \$10,000-a-head dinner with the Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I don't have the list of everyone who attended that particular fundraiser. What I can tell you—

Interjection: Was it Eleanor Clitheroe? She gave \$5,000 to the NDP.

The Speaker: Have you completed your answer?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. One second. I'd like to get some order. I'm trying to hear the response.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The developer in question, who has made public comments, is advocating the position he has been advocating for some time, both when we were in opposition and now in government, to have his land excluded from the greenbelt plan. Despite those efforts, the lands are in the greenbelt, because that's where they belong.

We believe strongly that those lands shouldn't be turned into strip malls and subdivisions, that they should be protected for our children. The greenbelt plan was developed based on science. It was based on relevant science. It has been passed by this Legislature, and this party stands for protecting the greenbelt over the objections of the—

The Speaker: Thank you. Order. Questions are addressed to the Speaker, and the responses are addressed to the Speaker. I tell those who turn their back to the Chair that I will go to the next question.

Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: It was a very simple question. I asked if Neil Rodgers, well-known lobbyist for the Urban Development Institute, was there. Of course, you didn't want to answer that question. But this is a bigger issue. This is about the McGuinty government's promises and the McGuinty government's standards. Before the election, Dalton McGuinty promised squeaky-clean—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order.

Mr. Hampton: All Ontarians see now is the same greed and backroom dealings that Dalton McGuinty used to rail against. Before the election, Dalton McGuinty said, "You deserve to know who donates to political parties as those donations happen." We agree. We deserve to know who paid \$10,000 to eat with the Premier at a secret dinner.

Will you confirm today that Rebecca MacDonald, chief executive officer of Energy Savings Income Fund and a big-time lobbyist for privatized electricity, was at the secret dinner?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I refer this question to the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I say to the leader of the third party—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member from Erie–Lincoln and also the member from Whitby–Ajax. Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The leader of the NDP says today that he supports real-time disclosure. Did the leader of the NDP support real-time disclosure when they were in government? No. Did the leader of the NDP answer the challenge of Dalton McGuinty in October of last year when we issued the challenge to all three parties to have real-time disclosure? No.

Yesterday, for the first time, Mr. Hampton didn't whisper to himself in the shower that he supports real-time disclosure, but rather said it out loud. So finally, we've got the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives answering the challenge of Dalton McGuinty, and finally we will get real-time disclosure in the province of Ontario.

1430

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The question was, was Rebecca MacDonald, a big-time lobbyist for privatized electricity, there?

Once again, the government doesn't want to answer the question of who attends the secret dinners and puts out the \$10,000 to enjoy Dalton McGuinty's ear. The people of Ontario deserve to know this. This is their government. They deserve to know who is paying \$10,000 to the Liberal Party to whisper in Dalton McGuinty's ear, "I don't want my land in the greenbelt." That's what it's about.

You used to rail against selling access to the Premier, but that's exactly what the McGuinty government is

doing: selling access to the Premier—I have to tell you, no one pays \$10,000 for the food. Will you confirm today that Steve Diamond, a development lawyer with McCarthy Tétrault, was at the secret dinner with the Premier?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I know that Mr. Tory, since he has been the leader of the Progressive Conservatives, has also been having a bunch of secret dinners and raising \$2.5 million, or \$15,000 a day. As the member knows, and as Mr. Tory knows, these names are disclosed to the public. There's absolutely nothing secret about who gives to the Ontario Liberal Party or the Progressive Conservative Party or the New Democratic Party.

I wrote to the member today. I said, "Where is your representative? Why are we taking so long to get real-time disclosure happening?" I say to the slow-time leader of the NDP, it's time to get real-time disclosure in the province of Ontario. Join the parade. Say it loud and say it proud. Say yes to real-time disclosure.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

Mr. Hampton: Again to the acting Premier: In case the McGuinty government misses it, this is real time. I've asked you the names, real time. Just answer the question.

Again, this is about the McGuinty government's promises and standards. You were the people who said you were not going to sell access to the Premier, you were not going to sell access to the Minister of Finance, you were going to make sure that didn't happen, that that bordered on corruption. What do we find? You're selling access to the Premier, but only if you've got \$10,000 a shot.

What's interesting is there's an ad today in the London Free Press. What does it advertise? That if you've got the money to put in, you can get access tonight to Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance and president of the Liberal Party—

The Speaker: I just want to caution: Many members are calling the names of individuals. They are all representatives of constituencies, and I'd rather you use the constituency name—as a matter of fact, you should use the name of the constituency they represent—or their title.

Mr. Hampton: If you have the money, you can attend a party tonight in London and have access to the Minister of Finance and president of the Liberal Party. It will be held at the house of Don Smith, of EllisDon construction fame.

Minister of Finance, can you tell us who is paying the big bucks to buy access to your ear tonight?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: There's the big secret: It's advertised. Let me say this: The fundraising activities of this party, of the official opposition and of the NDP are governed by law in this province. There is full disclosure of amounts given to those parties.

This party—our Premier—undertook real-time disclosure. We offered, by way of a letter today to Mr. Tory and to Mr. Hampton, the opportunity to put together a group to bring on real-time disclosure now. I'd like to see

how many developers contributed to the \$2.5 million that the Tories raised last year. I remember a fundraiser in Windsor in 1994 where the NDP—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: This is about the McGuinty government promise and the McGuinty government standards. You were the folks who were holier than thou, so sanctimonious. You said that this was going to happen. It was Dalton McGuinty who said, "The Harris-Eves government gave big money too much influence and citizens too little." I guess \$10,000 a plate is not big money now to the McGuinty government. It was Dalton McGuinty who said, "We believe that public decisions must be made in the public interest, not in the interests of a few well-financed political supporters." These are all \$10,000-a-plate developers.

Don't you think that the people of Ontario deserve to know who paid \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear? Don't you think that they deserve to know who is paying big money to have the Minister of Finance's ear tonight?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: We certainly do. We comply with the law, and we've offered to both the opposition parties the opportunity to bring real-time disclosure in right away.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, this finance minister had over 510 pre-budget consultations open to the public—to anyone who wanted to meet with him, he was available—more pre-budget consultation than any finance minister in the history of this province.

Our party is committed to real-time disclosure. We've offered today to begin the process to bring it in. We continue to operate under the existing laws, where every dollar contributed will be fully disclosed, as it will be for the opposition. We look forward to making a fulfillment of the commitment we made to bring in real-time disclosure to Ontario as soon as the opposition will agree to sit down and bring it forward.

Mr. Hampton: Again to the Acting Premier: We've said for some time that we have no problem. You're the government: Where is the bill? This is real time today.

I've asked you, was Neil Rodgers, a big spokesman for big developers, at the dinner? You won't answer. I asked you, was Rebecca MacDonald, a big-time lobbyist for private electricity, at the dinner? You won't answer. Yet this is real time. I've asked you, was Steve Diamond, a big-time development lawyer, at the dinner? I'm asking you again. This is real time; this is what you promised. When are you going to live up to your promises?

Don't you think the people of Ontario deserve to know who paid big money, \$10,000 a person, to have access to the Premier to talk about the greenbelt—what land was in, what land was out—at the very time that the greenbelt was being developed?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The attendees at the fundraiser under existing law will be fully disclosed. We have invited both the official opposition and the third party to sit down and negotiate the terms of how we're going to do

real-time disclosure. The Attorney General wrote earlier today to both parties, and we look forward to bringing that in just as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hampton: If I give you 10,000 bucks, will you tell me?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

We've got a new question from the member for Waterloo—Wellington.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): My question is to the Minister of Finance, who is also the chief fundraiser for the Liberal caucus. I return to the issue that's been raised in recent days concerning the odour emanating from the greenbelt developer fundraiser hosted by the minister's brother, where unidentified developers paid \$10,000 to have direct, unfiltered access to the Premier and this minister, while at the same time the government was considering the greenbelt boundaries. The facts, as I understand them, raise serious questions about the integrity of this government. This fundraiser does not pass the smell test, for it appears that the government's favour may have been for sale.

Today, I've asked legislative counsel to begin drafting a bill that I would hope to be able to introduce next week before the House rises, which would compel the established political parties in Ontario to disclose on their Web sites all significant financial contributions they receive the day they cash the cheques. Knowing the minister's expertise in political fundraising, his position on this bill would carry a lot of weight within his caucus.

My question is this: Will he express support for the principle of this kind of real-time disclosure of all significant contributions to our political parties, our riding associations and local candidates?

1440

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'll just say to my friend from Waterloo—Wellington that he is generally a person of integrity in this Legislature, and this question is not worthy of him. But I will say I am strongly in support, I tell my friend, of the notion of real-time disclosure. It was in our campaign literature. It will be the subject of a bill brought forward by the Attorney General in due course. It could be brought forth sooner if there were all-party agreement to do that.

But to my friend from Waterloo—Wellington and his friend from the east, Mr. Runciman, I think your conduct today is shocking.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): My question is also for the Minister of Finance. This offer to agree with the other political parties to do real-time disclosure has never been raised before today. It's the government's problem. They're the ones who have to go ahead and do it.

I was out on the lawn yesterday and spoke to hundreds of farmers, and I couldn't find one of them who was at the \$10,000 soiree; not one. No group of people is more affected by this greenbelt legislation than our farmers, but not one of them could buy a ticket to the \$10,000

influence-for-sale soiree. Yet the government, which is selling influence with the Premier—"How do you want the lines drawn? Send in a \$10,000 cheque with your suggestion on the back."

The Speaker: Order. I just want to examine—the words you are saying and using are very unparliamentary. I'd like you to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Yakabuski: Which words, Speaker? If I've said something unparliamentary, I withdraw.

The Speaker: You withdraw? That's all I want to hear. Go ahead.

Mr. Yakabuski: What I've asked the government—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Yakabuski: Can I not finish my question?

The Speaker: You've used up your time. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I'm delighted that my friend has finally taken some interest in the plight of farmers in this province. I should tell him that as late as this morning, I was meeting with representatives from the oil, corn and grain producers association of Ontario. I can tell him that in virtually every one of my pre-budget consultations I heard very clear and precise concerns from farmers talking about the crisis as a result of the collapse of grain prices and the crisis as a result of BSE and the closure of the Canadian border. I've heard from farmers from every corner of this province, and I just want to tell my friend that his approach in this way to advocacy of the issues of farmers in this Parliament does not help the issue one iota.

The Speaker: New question.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto—Danforth): A question to the Acting Premier: You've been dithering on your promise of real-time donor disclosure for over a year, and today we get this absolutely ridiculous letter offering to meet to discuss it on a volunteer level. During the election campaign, your platform stated: "You deserve to know who donates to political parties as those donations happen. We will make sure contributions are disclosed in real time as they occur."

Yes, we all deserve to know, and that's what we're asking you today. We deserve to know who paid \$10,000 a plate to talk about the greenbelt with the Minister of Finance and the Premier. We deserve to know who paid \$5,000 to chat about energy policy with you. We deserve to know who's paying the big bucks for the dinner tonight.

You found the time to ban pit bulls and chase the Stanley Cup. Why haven't you found the time to keep your campaign promise and introduce a bill with real teeth? Why aren't you doing that, and will you do it today? Introduce a bill that we can discuss and vote on.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I'm pleased by the new-found interest of the New Democratic Party in real-time disclosure. Look, the people deserve to know in real time, and that's what we want to do. We want to do it now, even before a law is in place. The NDP doesn't want to take yes for an answer. Would you please just make your

party designate known so we can get this going tomorrow?

Ms. Churley: Minister, New Democrats are happy to meet with you any time, any place, any how to get this done. We've said that for over a year and you know it. You are stalling, and the people of Ontario want to know just what it is you're trying to hide here. During the election campaign you said that people had a right to know who funded your party and that you would ensure they would know right away. I am asking you again, will you stop your dithering, will you bring forward a real bill that we can start debating today—a bill with teeth and penalties attached—and will you disclose, in real time, who was at the dinner with the Minister of Finance and the Premier during the time the greenbelt boundaries were being discussed?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I listened carefully when I repeated the challenge that Dalton McGuinty has made time after time since October of last year when I said again, in answer to the member's question yesterday, will you agree to Dalton McGuinty's challenge and engage in voluntary real-time disclosure now, even before the law is in place? She didn't give me an answer. Finally, we got an answer. We finally heard from John Tory and we finally heard from Howard Hampton. They said yes. They will finally join the parade and they will agree to voluntary real-time disclosure.

Of course, parties functionally provide the information. It's the party that provides the information, either to the chief electoral officer or, in this way, it will be the parties that make the information public. We have identified our designate, Deb Matthews, who wants to sit down with the Conservative designate and with the New Democratic designate so we can do this tomorrow. Would you please just tell us who Deb Matthews can call so we can get this going tomorrow?

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Yesterday the Premier and yourself were in Oshawa making a major announcement. I was pleased to be there in support. I saw the announcement on leading newscasts last night and on the front page of today's Toronto Sun. The automotive sector is an integral part of Ontario's economy. In my riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, we have automotive support companies and automotive employees. This is an industry that goes well beyond Oshawa, Oakville or Windsor. It affects many communities in Ontario. Minister, please remind this House about the importance of this announcement to all of Ontario.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'd like to thank the member for the question, because it is truly important to remind everyone that yesterday was surely a historic day in Ontario and a very proud day. GM's announcement of a \$2.5-billion investment is the single largest auto in-

vestment in Canadian history, something truly to be proud of.

The member is right. The benefits of this investment extend to many communities across the province. They extend to small-town Ontario and a long list of part suppliers that feed GM. This is very important for those communities. It adds, potentially, an enormous number of new spinoff jobs, so this is incredibly important for those communities, as I say. As well, I want to underline that this investment will move us up the value chain in terms of putting innovation at the forefront. There is a big commitment to engineering and design and a big commitment to a highly educated, highly skilled workforce.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I want to start by personally commending the minister on the good news yesterday and for his excellent work in that regard.

I'm glad to hear that this announcement is going to lead to a stronger auto sector in Ontario, an auto sector that drives the Ontario economy. I know it drives the economy in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. We all believe that this will affect all of Ontario because this is truly a province-wide industry, an industry where we lead North America.

But it seems there are some critics of your plan for high-pay, high-value jobs in the province. Yesterday in this House, the member for Erie-Lincoln, Mr. Hudak, said, "The government has a strong predisposition against the automobile," and then he said, "There's an anti-automobile message that comes through quite a bit from the government's pronouncements." Minister, can you remind this House of the importance of your announcement?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: I was heartened to hear the member for Oshawa say that this was an important announcement, but I can't say the same thing about his leader.

Yesterday, John Tory had this to say about GM's investment: "It's not a priority for this province." I was very disappointed with that viewpoint. I can't understand why John Tory would not support high-value-added jobs, why he would not support the nearly 150,000 auto jobs that exist in this province, why he wouldn't support the spinoffs that are 10 to one from this investment and why he's against growing a strong economy that's thriving and putting innovation at the forefront.

I ask the member for Oshawa, please ask your leader why he's against auto investment and why he doesn't see this as a priority. Go to him and ask him that, would you?

1450

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is not here.

Mr. Hudak: Then to the Acting Premier: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said to consult the Web site and all the science behind the greenbelt boundaries would be there. We've gone to the Web site: a meagre number of pages that are vague statements and guidelines at best.

A week or so ago, the minister said that the boundaries and decisions are based on the LEAR studies. They're not on the Web site. In fact, when I specifically asked for those studies, I was given one for Ottawa–Carleton—nowhere near the greenbelt area.

If it's true that this is based on science, why are you hiding the studies? Why won't you produce them for public review?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member from Toronto–Danforth, please stop shouting.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Proceed with your question, member from Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: In the absence of any real science on the Web site and in the absence of any LEAR studies for the greenbelt area, please answer the question. What are you hiding? Why hasn't the science come forward? Will you please produce the science immediately so that we know who actually made the decisions behind the greenbelt boundaries?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The greenbelt was developed through a combination of technical, scientific and land use planning analysis to identify areas for permanent protection. It is the exact same methodology that the Conservatives used to determine the Oak Ridges moraine plan.

The systems approach used to develop the greenbelt was based on Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Natural Resources, municipal and conservation authority data, and builds on the systems of the Niagara Escarpment plan and the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan. The systems approach includes a natural system, an agricultural system, agricultural land and valuation area review, the so-called LEAR and settlement areas.

On February 3, 2005, 75 respected scientists and environmental professionals, including Dr. David Suzuki, signed their names in support of a strong greenbelt for southern Ontario as an important strategy for controlling urban sprawl, improving air and water quality and protecting endangered species, natural habitats and farmland.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: What a bunch of nonsense. You give the impression that these 75 scientists went through your work and endorsed it. That's completely not in keeping with the facts. They support the concept of a greenbelt, but they never saw the science. You never saw the science. I'll bet cabinet never

saw the science, except for the political science behind the greenbelt boundaries.

I have asked in this Legislature and in committee, time and time again, for these LEAR studies that you just mentioned, Acting Premier. Do you know what they are? Ghost studies. They don't exist. They're not on the Web site. They've been knocking the opposition. We had to do an FOI at a \$1,500 charge. There are two options: You pay 1,500 bucks to try to get some paper, or you pay \$10,000 to go to a fundraiser.

I ask the minister again, will he produce the science behind these boundaries immediately, or do we have to go to one of your fundraisers to find out?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The only science that member and that party care about is the science of protecting their developer friends. That's why they opposed us on the greenbelt. Why did you vote against something that 75 scientists signed off on? Why?

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'd like to hear the minister.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This party has consistently stood up in favour of—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I want to warn the member from Erie–Lincoln. As soon as I've sat down, you're shouting again.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This party and our leader have stood day after day in this House to protect the interests of developers over the broader public interest. We look forward to real-time disclosure to find out how many developers have been giving to them in the last year and a half. We don't understand why they voted against protecting—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I want to warn the member from Simcoe North. I don't expect behaviour like that from an individual like yourself, who is also a prominent member in your party.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Day after day, they've stood to defend the interests of developers over the greenbelt. This party brought forward, introduced and passed the most progressive piece of greenbelt legislation imaginable. It was based on science—science that's well known and understood by that member and his party.

The greenbelt is in the best interests of Ontario. We'll stand for the greenbelt. They stand for the developers. The future is this party, not the—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): In the absence of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I will be asking this question of the Acting Premier. Yesterday, we learned that after 14 months under CCAA protection, Stelco is essentially back to square one when it comes to securing the jobs of thousands of current employees and the pensions of thousands of other workers. The company has apparently

rejected all suitors and is now seeking a financial deal on Bay Street.

Minister, the New Democratic Party believes that without an active role by government, there's no way a deal can be struck that both solves a serious pension underfunding situation and frees up the \$400 million required for a badly needed modernization of the facilities. In the past 14 months, your government has been missing in action when it comes to this file. That's part of the reason that we are essentially back to square one.

My question is this, Mr. Minister: Will you guarantee to this House that no deal will be approved by your government that doesn't guarantee funds for solving both the pension underfunding and modernization issues? Will you finally step up to the plate or are you once again going to be missing in action?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): The member is relatively new to this House, but I want to remind her of the history around this issue.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): She won't like it.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: No, she won't like it, because it was her party that gave Stelco and a few other companies a pension holiday that got us into this mess in the first place.

It now is a situation that we have to deal with, with respect to Stelco. It is recovering, but I have to remind the member that Stelco is still under Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act protection; it's still going through the courts. So you have to keep that in mind. Anything that emerges from this we'll have to deal with at that time.

Ms. Horwath: Minister, your government has been invisible since Stelco went into bankruptcy 14 months ago, and the people in my riding and throughout the region do want to see your government finally taking some action here.

Our steel and auto sectors are interdependent. We need both to be healthy and thriving if Ontario is truly to achieve its economic potential. We on this side of the House strongly believe that this province needs a steel sector modernization fund that would work with Stelco and other Ontario steel companies to make sure that badly needed upgrading projects are undertaken. Ontario steel communities simply can't continue to go through the kind of economic turmoil they've seen in recent years. It simply doesn't have to be this way.

Will you finally get it together on the steel file, Minister? Will you immediately introduce a steel sector modernization fund so the jobs and pensions of Ontario steelworkers are secure into the future?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: This government did take action. We appointed a special adviser, Jim Arnett, to look into this matter, to monitor it, and we continue to monitor. I remind the member that the company is still

under creditors' protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. So we have to be silent on this until they emerge from that process.

There are a number considerations to take into account. The steel industry has found itself in some difficulty, facing international competition that was unprecedented. Things have turned around somewhat in terms of steel prices, but we're going to have to wait until this process of going through the courts is completed.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. This week is National Engineering Week, a very important week in Ontario. Each year, Ontario welcomes thousands of internationally trained engineers. A high percentage of highly skilled immigrants coming to Ontario identify themselves as engineers. Our government has done a great deal to help reduce the barriers that internationally trained engineers face in entering Ontario's workforce. By taking advantage of the expertise that these individuals offer our province, we're ensuring that our province will have the skills we need in the years to come. I understand that yesterday's General Motors announcement has added an exciting component to the efforts we have made to assist internationally trained engineers. Could you tell us more about this new initiative?

1500

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm very pleased to respond to the question from the member from Ottawa-Orléans, whom I also know to be an engineer. Thanks for the great interest.

The GM announcement is exciting on several fronts, not only in terms of what it's doing for the economy and what it's doing for the post-secondary sector, but also for a file that I feel privileged to have the opportunity to chair on behalf of our government, and that is the integration of internationally trained professionals.

The exciting offshoot of the GM announcement is actually an opportunity for some 60 internationally trained individuals to have work opportunities at General Motors as interns. This will be over a three-year period, with each of these opportunities being a year in duration. It's very exciting.

Mr. McNeely: Minister, this is an innovative initiative that is sure to be of great benefit to the internationally trained. It is yet another step that our government is taking to ensure that Ontario reaches its full potential based on the strengths and skills of its people. I know that many of the initiatives our government has undertaken to help the internationally trained have been occupation-specific, to ensure that we are addressing the unique needs and challenges of each profession and trade. This is certainly not the first announcement our government has made with respect to internationally trained engineers. Could you provide some context as to

how this most recent initiative fits in with previous announcements you have made to help internationally trained engineers?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: Last year we actually announced another investment in partnership with Professional Engineers Ontario, the regulator for engineers here in Ontario. It was a \$2-million announcement which will have Professional Engineers Ontario create an interactive Web site to provide information to would-be and new immigrants on the processes for licensure here, and also on labour market factors for that profession here in Ontario.

Canadian work experience, however, is really the big issue and that's why the GM announcement is so exciting. As part of the PEO announcement last year, there is a college-level program that will be developed by Professional Engineers Ontario which could actually be an alternative to the one year of Canadian work experience. As we all know, you don't get work experience without having a job, so it's really quite a difficult issue to deal with. I'm excited that GM and Professional Engineers Ontario are on board with this.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Health. This morning at a press conference, Canada's Association for the Fifty Plus and the Best Medicines Coalition expressed grave concerns that the staff in the Premier's office have confirmed that your government is considering implementing reference-based pricing for Ontario's drug benefit formulary and that a specific class of drugs has been isolated: proton pump inhibitors for the treatment of gastroenteritis and gastrointestinal diseases. It has further come to our attention that your Minister of Finance has confirmed that they have sent a memo to you that you must find cost cutting or savings of \$150 million in the Ontario drug benefit program.

According to CARP today, they have said that it would be ludicrous and dangerous to remove working medications for patients and force them to adapt to a new program. My question to you is this, Minister: Why are you considering endangering seniors' health care with reference-based pricing in Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In the one minute that I have, I will not have time to separate the fact from fiction in that story. But I can confirm for the honourable member that the government is grappling with the challenges of drug costs, which in our health care system are growing at a rate of 15% a year. The honourable member will know about the challenges because he was part of a government that not only had an actual dollar decrease in the Ontario drug benefit of \$34.1 million in 1996-97, but was also the government that introduced copayments for seniors and welfare recipients. We are going to have to explore a variety of mechanisms to manage drug costs in this province. I can confirm that reference-based pricing

is one of those we will take a look at. I can also confirm for all Ontarians that this government has invested a quarter of a billion dollars in new resources in the Ontario drug benefit this year alone.

Mr. Jackson: You would know that we may have budgeted, but we did spend more on this program in each and every year we were in government. But I'm talking to you today about your policy and your inability to manage. This policy will increase out-of-pocket costs for seniors, persons with disabilities and those on social assistance. Today, Lillian Morganthau, the president of CARP, warned our Premier by saying, "Make no mistake. Any policy which forces seniors to stop using a medication that works well for them will be viewed as nothing more than a health care cut." Even the Toronto Star refers to the Liberal government in British Columbia's experience as "treatment failure," and as a result savings were offset with more doctor and hospital visits.

My question again, Minister: Why are the McGuinty Liberals shortchanging seniors on their health care, and why are you doing it in such a cowardly way?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member seeks to take an acknowledgment that there are a variety of options before the government and then pretend that this decision has been taken and implemented; neither has. The honourable member, with all due respect, hasn't been told any of that by the Premier's office. The reality is we acknowledge that this drug budget, which only a few years ago was about \$1 billion, is now \$3 billion. The very sustainability of medicare is a genuine issue. We seek always to expand the degree of coverage we have. The reality is, though, that when the program is running at a 15% increase, one must look at a variety of options to address that so that it can be sustained for future generations. No decisions on these matters have been taken. I candidly acknowledge that we will be having a discussion about it, and I look forward to the ongoing interest of the honourable member and other groups on this subject.

HYDRO GENERATION

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Energy. Minister, you will soon announce who will be awarded contracts to build new generation in Ontario. OPG has proposed to build a Portlands Energy Centre in my riding. It was originally promoted to the community as a cogeneration plant, but then, weeks before the application deadline, OPG removed cogen from the equation. The city had passed resolutions that called for this plant to only receive consideration if it is cogen. To quote you, "Mayor Miller has expressed concerns about the lack of cogeneration. It's the belief of this government that cogeneration and solar should be part of all projects going forward," so you seem to agree. I ask you now, will your decision around PEC follow what you said earlier in this House?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): With respect to whether or not Portlands is in that particular RFP, I am not aware of that. That is being conducted now by the Ontario Power Authority. I know that the member opposite has expressed concerns. The government is committed to ensuring that Ontario has an adequate supply of electricity in the short and long term. We remain committed to replacing coal-fired generation and will identify the cleanest and most affordable potential sources in Ontario as a replacement for coal.

A PEC spokesman was quoted in fall 2004 media reports saying that the partners would submit a bid under the Ministry of Energy's request for proposals. As this process is underway, I'm really not in a position to discuss the merits of any of the energy supply projects. I have no knowledge of them; it's being conducted by the OPA.

I do want to say to the member that I share her view that cogeneration is an important environmental aspect of any proposal. I can't comment on the specifics of this particular one. She will be aware, for instance, that we have announced the appointment of an industrial cogeneration facilitator because we believe in it. We'll see what comes out of this particular RFP and go from there.

Ms. Churley: Minister, I'm glad you share my views on this. You are the minister, and you have a responsibility and the ability to set the policies around what kind of new generation is built. That is absolutely key for this sustainability of our future. At the start of February, the city passed a second resolution for PEC to be cogen. Adopting the city's resolutions would be a natural choice if you are truly interested in reducing greenhouse gases through energy conservation and efficiency. In this day and age, we can't be building new gas plants unless they are cogen. You need to make that policy and stick to it.

1510

So I'm going to ask you again: Will you put into action your words and assure the people of Toronto that the proposal will not even be considered if cogen is not put back into the proposal?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: It does not fall to the minister to make the determinations on the RFP. There is a separate body set up, with a fairness commissioner overseeing it.

I again say to the member opposite that we do share her views about the environment, and we want to replace the Lakeview coal-fired plant. We believe in reducing the environmental footprint associated with energy projects.

I am not aware of whether or not there is an application under the RFP. I can't comment as to the veracity of any of this. What I can tell you is that this government has done a lot more to encourage cogen than any previous government in the history of Ontario.

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. You recently introduced legislation that contained a variety of measures to ease congestion and improve safety on our roads. A lot of people are very supportive of this, certainly in my riding, where we have that kind of a problem.

I know that there have been several recent high-profile incidents on some of our roads, where auto parts have become detached from vehicles and caused fatalities, in some instances, and property damage. So the first part of my question is, can you explain what the details are of this proposal, and how it's to be applied? My second part is, what is the range of the fines that I believe you have in your legislation, and how can we ensure that it's going to be fairly applied?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): First, I would like to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre. The legislation that I recently proposed, if passed, would create an offence for parts falling off a vehicle. The intention of this proposal is to make sure that we can maintain safety on our highways and roads. This proposal will apply to all drivers, vehicle owners or mechanics who fail to maintain their cars and parts fall off their vehicles, not just cars but trucks as well.

The fines that we are proposing are very similar to the fines that are currently in place for cargo enforcement, so these fines range from \$400 to \$20,000 for commercial vehicles and from \$100 to \$2,000 for non-commercial vehicles.

Mr. Patten: Thank you, Minister. Bill 169 has other measures that deal with truck safety. The one I want to ask you about is the daily vehicle inspection. As I understand it, before commercial carriers operate their vehicles, they are required to inspect their vehicles. They'll have to follow a checklist to make sure that their vehicle is safe to operate. Among the many things that they have to look at are checks for flat tires, loose wheel fasteners, emergency brakes that may not be working etc.

I've heard from some truck drivers that they are concerned about some of these changes. Are you able to give them an indication of what these changes might be and when they may be implemented when the bill is passed, if the bill is passed?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I again want to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre. The revised standards are built on the result of a successful pilot project conducted by the Ministry of Transportation. It was also supported by both truck drivers and the trucking industry. It creates revised national standards, which I understand will be used throughout the country by the other provinces as well. It in fact simplifies the inspection process to a certain extent, because the inspection process right now is quite complicated, although it increases it a little bit in scope. These regulations are currently being developed for this, and we expect, once the legislation is passed, that it will come into effect in 2006.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by a lot of farmers who were here at Queen's Park yesterday, who signed this petition with grave concerns—their concerns are about agriculture, not about the petition, Mr. Speaker.

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I affix my signature. I just wanted to add that there are many signatures from constituents in my riding of Oxford who have signed this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): A number of constituents have asked me to table this petition.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental

disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'll be tabling this with the Clerk.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of HRC to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls. This is sent to us by a group of concerned citizens in Niagara Falls, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community;

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the ... government" of Ontario "support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I agree with this petition. I'll sign it, and I'm going to have Annieza bring it down for me.

1520

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I too have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I agree with this petition, and I'll affix my name to it.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here, and it's signed by many people from in and around the Huronia area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families"—and I'm one of them—"the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies"—and I would point out that my cousin Leonard is a resident there.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I know that my aunt Doris would like to have signed this if she'd had the chance.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition which is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, and the Minister of Transportation. It read as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning a tunnel in an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

"Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue and Old Weston Road bridge; and

"Whereas this bridge or this underpass, depending which way it goes, will be (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way since it will have only one lane of traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians. It's about 50 metres long. It's dark and sloping on both the east and west sides, creating a high bank for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under the St. Clair Avenue West bridge, thus eliminating this eyesore with its high banks and blank walls. Instead, it will create a dynamic, revital-

ized community enhanced by a beautiful, continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

Since I agree with this wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This man's cheating.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I'd caution the member from Simcoe North that petitions are being spoken to.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

It's signed by a number of constituents from Centre Wellington and also the communities of Stratford and Rockwood.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I do have another petition, and Aunt Doris's name is on it. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre,”—where my cousin Leonard lives, by the way—“home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into ‘centres of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition and plan on working on behalf of keeping that centre open.

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I was presented with a number of names in my constituency, and in the best interests of my constituents I read the following:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas 20% of the adult population, or 1.8 million adults in Ontario, continue to smoke; and

“Whereas hospitality concepts like bars, pubs, taverns, nightclubs, Legions, bingo halls, racetracks and casinos are businesses with a high percentage of patrons who smoke; and

“Whereas more than 700 businesses in Ontario have invested tens of thousands of dollars each to construct a designated smoking room to comply with municipal bylaws;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Permit properly ventilated and separated designated smoking rooms in hospitality establishments that regulate and control employee and customer exposure to second-hand smoke.”

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly to protect anaphylactic students—and I'm very supportive of Dave Levac's Bill 3.

“Whereas there are no established Ontario-wide standards to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Ontario Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all Ontario schools;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support the swift passage of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, that requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I'm pleased to support this petition and affix my name to it.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 1, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act/ Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate, the member from Timmins-James Bay. I knew you were speaking.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): You can try if you want, Speaker, but you can't shut up the people of Huronia who are living in that centre and want to stay there.

The Acting Speaker: Keep going. You've got seven minutes.

Mr. Bisson: The last time we had the opportunity to speak on this bill, I was pointing out to the government that the approach the government has taken when it comes to this bill is kind of interesting. Just so people remember, because you may not have watched the other night when we were talking about this, the government has a bill before the House that will basically change the regime when it comes to when school boards and school board unions are able to negotiate.

We all remember that the former government had decided that negotiations would be, I believe, every three years, and people had to negotiate contracts around three-year time frames. I, as a New Democrat, and other New Democrats, always took the view that it should be up to unions and employers to determine how long a collective agreement should be. You have some agreements that are quite short. I've been a negotiator for the United Steelworkers as well as a negotiating committee member within my old local, 4440, and we used to have collective agreements as short as a year. On the other hand, I saw Abitibi's local energy and paperworkers union negotiate agreements that were as long as seven years.

My point is that it's up to the local bargaining parties to decide how long a collective agreement should be. If there are economic or other reasons why they think a collective agreement should be for one year, that's up to the parties to determine, right? Or if it's seven years, again it's up to the parties. I just say to the government

that democracy is what's it is all about. We can't say that we believe in democracy and then try to stifle people's rights when it comes to those rights in a democracy.

I will say here on the record—I want to say it before you heckle—that the social contract was the wrong thing to do, absolutely.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): How did you vote?

Mr. Bisson: I voted for it. It was the wrong thing to do to from the collective agreement point of view. I've said that publicly a number of times. Our government, quite frankly, was rightfully punished on the part of a number of people in the labour unions because they didn't agree with what we did. I learned something and our party learned something on that. We've moved on and said, "Hey, we'll never do that again."

I'm just saying to the government, listen, I've been there, and it is not the right thing to do. You don't monkey around with people's fundamental rights when it comes to how they operate within a democracy. One of the basic fundamental rights we have in a democracy, as enunciated in the charter, is that we have the right to associate; we have the right to free speech; we have the right to our ability to travel within our communities. A whole bunch of rights are conferred and one of those happens to be extended to labour rights. We're quite lucky in this country, as in other countries where democracies exist, to have strong trade unions that are able to negotiate decent benefits and working conditions and wages for their employees. I know that a number of members on the opposite side, in the government, believe that as I do.

The only point I make is that, if we now start doing what you're purporting to do, which is that in opposition you were opposed to setting bargaining limits at three years, and you've become the government and now you say it's two or four, I say to myself, why do we have legislation that goes from three to two or four? It has everything to do with when the bargaining would happen. You're deathly afraid to have bargaining with teachers in an election year. That's what this bill is all about, because if the current regime stays in place, as set out under the Conservative Party, there are automatically going to be negotiations, in the summer of 2007 for the most part.

The unions will have demands, and we know that. The employers are going to have demands, and we know that too. Employers, in some situations, may be looking for some form of concession from their bargaining agents, from their employees. I don't like that, but I recognize they have a right to put that on the table, and employees, being the union, are going to have demands. I'm sure some people will have a problem with some of those demands. That's what happens in negotiations. The parties sit down and they negotiate.

This government is afraid to be put in the position of having to be in negotiations with teachers barely a couple of months before the fall election of 2007, if they enact that legislation around fixed election dates. That's

something we haven't done yet, by the way, and I'll remind you that it's something we should be doing. However, there are other parts of that bill we need to deal with and we'll get into that another day.

My point is that that's what this is all about. It's about you saying, "I don't want to have bargaining during 2007 because it's an election year. I'll pass legislation that moves the bargaining to either the year before or the year after." I think that's wrong. Quite frankly, we should leave it up to people to decide how long their collective agreements are going to be when they negotiate. That's one of the basic rights we have to give people. Like them or hate them as far as employers' tactics or union tactics when it comes to negotiation, there's a dynamic that happens in negotiations that we need to respect.

The other thing in this bill—and I spoke to it very briefly the other night—is the whole issue of penalties. This is going down a road that I really believe we don't want to go down as legislators, and that is, we're saying to school boards, "If you negotiate a collective agreement that ends in the year 2007, I'm"—"I" being the province—"going to take away from the school board the dollars we give them for staff development."

Wow. What a dumb thing to do. Every employer out there understands that the way to have productive employees and employees who feel satisfied in their jobs, like teachers, is to give them some professional development, allow them to basically build on the skills they got by way of whatever certificate they came in with when they started the teaching career, whatever it might be, and build on those skills by doing professional development. I can't believe the government would put in jeopardy professional development dollars if the school boards decide not to follow this legislation. I think that's just a really wrong message to send.

We know in our economy of today the thing that's going to give us the kind of competitiveness and the edge we need in the future to compete against many economies in the Pacific Rim and other places that are now emerging. We can't compete in a low-wage economy. We're going to lose that fight. The way we're going to compete is by having very well-trained people who know what they're doing and are able to be excellent at what they do, and that is continued in the workplace by things like professional development.

And who more important than our teachers? You can fight against teachers all you want. You can be on the side of some in this Legislature in the past who like to fight teachers, but the reality is that they are with our kids all the time. They give the kids the start they need in the school system to be able to make choices about their life and where they're going to go. We need to make sure those teachers have the tools necessary to be fresh and current when it comes to their skills to motivate those kids and help them along in making their decisions along with we, the parents, because we have a responsibility as parents. But we need to make sure that our teachers have all the skills and all the current information they need not only to teach well inside the classroom but also to help

kids along in making some of the decisions they make about going to school post-secondary, either college or university.

For the government to say, "If you don't live up to this legislation and there are negotiations in 2007, we're going to penalize you by taking away your money for staff development," I think is absolutely ridiculous.

With the last 10 seconds I've got, on the Huronia Centre, I've got to say that this is a real serious issue and the government's got to give its head a shake because a lot of people are going to get hurt if we go down this road.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I want to speak in support of this particular bill and talk about some of the relationships and having a healthy working relationship with our teachers.

We are coming out of a period when there has been a great deal of antagonism between government and teachers, and we are finally moving toward a working relationship that I think benefits all. We are trying very hard to make sure that our teachers have stability and peace within their environment. That's very important, because they are working with our children. A teacher can influence children just by what's happening to them as a profession in terms of how they relate to children and how well they work in co-operation with those children. We want teachers to feel the stability of long-term contracts, and that's what we are doing.

The previous member mentioned things such as trying to avoid a negotiation during an election year. Quite honestly, I think that if you were to do a negotiation during an election year, you're working on a big-stick theory as opposed to working in a more co-operative way. Negotiations should be taking place during a very neutral time. They need to be done at a neutral time when all parties have an equal opportunity at the table, not when one has an advantage over the other. Negotiations are about working together co-operatively, and that's where we want to go with our teachers. We want to work co-operatively with them to derive the kind of environment our children will benefit from, because our children are, bottom line, the most important of all in this type of thing.

1540

We want our teachers to feel stability. We want them to have peace. They need long-term agreements that mean peace not only for them, but also for the parents. In my own riding, parents are often very concerned about what's going to happen in terms of negotiations and teachers' strikes and that sort of thing. So we need this type of long-term stability, and therefore I support this bill.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to be up this Thursday afternoon to take part in the second reading debate on Bill 167, the Education Act. I guess I wonder why we're even discussing this bill, with all the important issues the government should be addressing. Trying to politicize an election date—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: You know what? I'm hearing a couple of ministers heckle me over there. What's really important is that this piece of legislation is politicizing election dates. It's as simple as that. This government simply does not want to have an election fall on the year contracts expire, the year 2007. We know that. It's clear as a bell. That's what this whole issue has been about. These are the same people who criticized the previous government with their education activities and legislation, and are now bringing forth a piece of legislation that takes away the expiry dates on the year they've called the next election, sometime in 2007.

What they have done, though, is made other announcements on 2007. For example, I read with interest about the new casino money, the hotel complex in Windsor. I understand it will be open in 2007. I wonder, and I've said this before in this House, if the official opening will be before or after October 7, 2007, when John Tory is the new Premier of this province. I think it's very simple. We know right now that it will be before, because Minister Duncan and Minister Papatello have to have something to brag about. There certainly isn't anything from their performance here in this House. So what we'll see is an election date, and a ribbon-cutting before October 7, 2007.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It is always a privilege and a pleasure to comment on my good friend from Timmins–James Bay and his eloquence in this House. I must comment. I'm not going to speak so much about what he had to say, although I have some notes, but I was quite intrigued after a number of days of debate on this issue—and I have witnessed it both here in this House and on the television in my office downstairs—to finally hear from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who actually said it honestly and succinctly in this House in her two minutes, that this is about bringing negotiations and labour peace at a time other than when we're going into an election. When I read the bill, I couldn't understand what it was about except for that. I've heard lots of speeches about lots of things, but no one has succinctly put it that this is about buying labour peace in advance of the election so that the government can sort of sidestep this issue.

But I have to tell you, it's not just about buying labour peace for this Legislature. What you are doing by way of this bill is not buying labour peace for the boards. In two years, that's exactly when the boards are going to be coming forward for their particular election. You're going to see the boards of education, the municipalities and the others, instead of having labour peace, which they would have had under the old act, now in some kind of turmoil under this proposal.

So it's all well and good to buy it for yourselves, it's all well and good to buy it for this Liberal government, but you're not doing any favours to the boards that have to sit down and do the hard negotiations. I want the members to think: It's all well and good to do things that are going to help you, and help you to get re-elected, but

you're not working with your partners in the municipal sector and the boards of education who are going to have to do the real hard jobs here, and who are going to be held accountable for it by way of the legislation as well if they step over your line.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): There is no question in my mind that this is about a genuine relationship between the educational community, the government and parents. The key word is "genuine." Just to be fair, my colleague the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex referred to peace, but of course she was referring to peace for everybody, not just labour peace.

What is important is that we want to make sure that students can learn in an atmosphere of peace and stability. That is why this bill aims to create a longer-term contract with the boards, and that is why we are planning on guaranteeing multi-year funding for boards that enter into two- or four-year agreements. Of course, we emphasize four-year agreements much more than the two-year ones.

The member from Timmins–James Bay spoke about rights under the charter. I agree with that—certainly, as good Canadians. But what about the right of students to learn, which is not in the charter? This is extremely important, especially for new immigrants. Yes, I know them well and I know many of them. There are many new immigrants in my riding of Markham, and I can tell you that disruption is so devastating to them because they just want their kids to be able to learn in a peaceful and stable environment. It's bad enough for students to have come from a different community, to have come from a different culture, and to suffer the disruptions that many of them did before the election. To be quite honest with you, the parents don't really care why the negotiations fail; they just don't want to have the disruption. Don't explain to them why there are disruptions and why it's good for whomever. I think they are entitled to have their kids educated in a peaceful and stable manner.

I think stability is of the essence, and this bill is vital to the very future of Ontario's publicly funded system.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the cat's out of the bag. I wasn't me. I said it in my speech, but it was only little ol' me, Gilles Bisson, member of the NDP from Timmins–James Bay in the third party opposition.

I was saying to the government, you're only doing this because you're trying to get away from having negotiations in an election year. People heckled me the other day—they heckled me somewhat today, but not as much, and I thank you for that—saying no, that wasn't the case at all. But the two Liberal members who got up to respond to my speech have basically said, "We need labour peace in 2007." If that doesn't mean to say that we are pushing this off an election year, I don't know what it means, Speaker.

The cat's out of the bag, so why don't you guys just—like, the first step in being able to deal with a problem is admitting that you have one. I say this is a good start. My

good friend from—I don't remember the riding. I have great respect for these two members, because they are honest individuals who have said, "I am prepared to take the first step and to admit that I've got a problem. And, yes, I don't want to have negotiations in 2007 because it's an election year and it's going to be tough enough as it is. I don't need those pesky teachers bugging me." I say that's a good first step. I have to congratulate the two members from the Liberal Party for being courageous and standing and saying it the way it is.

Now I encourage the rest of you in the Liberal caucus. As I look into the eyes of my friends across the way, I say, be bold. Step forward. Admit that you're doing this because there's an election in 2007. If we can get to that, we can deal with the issue. I understand what your issue is: You want to be popular next election. We have all kinds of ideas here in the opposition to help you out with that. Listen to the opposition. You might do a lot better next election.

1550

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I think that if anybody in this House thinks there is going to be labour peace in this world, they are smoking something strange.

I think there needs to be some honesty around the issue of dealing with what happens in bargaining. To suggest that two parties come together in the school board sector and sit down and bargain and then go away because it's done within a short period of time—again, they believe in never-never land.

The fact of the matter is that I've been in some bargaining situations where the bargaining is finished, it's completed within a month, and then you're starting all over again. That's the nature of bargaining. People do not come, sit down, work out their problems, sign a contract and move on. They come for a day, they talk a little and then six weeks later they might meet again. Then another month or two go by and they rattle the sabres; they do all the stuff out in the public and pretend that's bargaining. That's not bargaining. If they were really quite sincere about bargaining on behalf of the students, which is what should be at the centre of their thinking, then they would sit at the table and find some solutions to the problems. But that's not what they do.

The union comes out and bargains on behalf of their members, not the children, and I think we need to remember that. School boards bargain because they're within a particular parameter that they need to deal with, and typically it's their money. At the end of the day they trade bodies for bucks. It has been ever thus in the years that I was involved.

So I think some honesty is due to the people who are watching this. What happened with the previous government when they amalgamated the school boards was that all collective agreements came due on the same date. Do you want to talk about how difficult it really is for the school boards to sit down and start bargaining with all of their unions on the same date? You can imagine how it

stretches the resources within some of the boards. Some are larger and can do it; others cannot do it.

At least with two or four years—and I don't think it makes a hill of beans whether there's an election or not—you can start to stagger that so that we don't get whip-sawed back and forth, which is what usually happens when you're all bargaining on the same day. If you think about it now, the Toronto District School Board has all of their unions—they can strike at the same time.

If you don't think that's a bit of bravado on their part in terms of their employees—absolutely. It's not the kids they're thinking about, and when someone turns around and says, "We're doing this in the best interests of the children," I find that unconscionable. In fact, what they should be doing is coming to the table with their challenges on both sides and finding solutions if they believe it's in the best interests of the children.

At least with this bill, it permits the staggering of some of the collective agreements. Do I think they're all going to happen within the next few months? No. It's going to take some time for these to happen. So some of them may in fact be during the election and some may not even be resolved until after the election. What I do think is that we need to find a new way of doing bargaining, period, in terms of how we deal with the children in this province.

I apologize as well, Mr. Speaker. I am going to share my time with my colleague Brad Duguid.

One of the difficulties that we believe—or I believe, anyway—is a challenge in the school board sector with bargaining is that there has been unrest for a long period of time, and there is a lot of suspicion out there. There is the unrest because people have been treated disrespectfully on both sides, and I believe it's time to change that. You're not going to have peace in the valley, which I used to ask for, until you start to re-establish some mutual trust among the people who are at the table, and there's a lot of water under the bridge on that one. It's going to take a long time to get people to come back to thinking whether there is another way we can approach this so we can honestly say it's in the best interests of the children we serve, regardless of whether you're a caretaker or a secretary, who is just as valuable as that teacher in the classroom. They all have a part to play in the role supporting those children through their education.

For me, two things: One is that it provides some relief. The three years was not acceptable. It is just too difficult. It permitted the whipsawing to go back and forth. The other is that it made sure that the provincial bargaining agents were in fact the provincial bargaining bodies of the federation. That changes the dynamics at the local level as well, because it's very difficult to deal with the two.

There's a whole slew of issues that need to be resolved about this, but to stand up and say it's all about election is nonsense. All of you have been in this province long enough to know that the unions are going to strike when the unions are going to strike, regardless. If they can take advantage of a particular situation, they will. They do

that as part of their membership. It's part of their responsibility to do so. Also, in terms of the school board, they're stuck within the parameters because you're dealing with a particular business, if you like, that is 98% or 80% human resources, so you don't have much with which to work. So a little honesty would be helpful.

Thank you for the opportunity to say it's time to move on and support the bill.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): It's always great to follow the member for Etobicoke Centre because she always makes such common sense in what she says. When she speaks about education, she knows what she's talking about, as a former chair of the Toronto District School Board. It is so valuable to a government to have members with such experience in our caucus, assisting us and providing advice to us all on these kinds of issues. She's doing a great job as well as PA to the Minister of Energy.

Our government is committed to improving student achievement and giving students the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly tough workplace environment and an increasingly competitive job market. But disruptions caused by the negotiation process can really disturb and impact the quality of the educational experience for teachers and the quality of their work life, for administration staff and for parents as well, who have to cope with getting their kids to and from school, but most importantly, for our children. Nobody expects the collective bargaining process to be perfect. Nobody expects that a better-managed education system will bring utopia to labour relations, but there's no question that the approach taken by the McGuinty government contrasts greatly with that of the previous government. Frankly, there is no question that the approach the McGuinty government has taken is already bearing fruit.

Let's do a little comparison between the old approach and the new approach. The former government liked to bash teachers. The former government liked to play to that base public opinion, tried to play to that and make teachers feel less appreciated than they really should be. This government, the McGuinty government, respects teachers. We recognize that teachers are an essential part of our society, an essential part of our economic future, one of the most important—if not the most important—professions in our entire community. The previous government set out to create a crisis in education. Their own Minister of Education stated that very thing.

We have taken a different approach. We are working with teachers to improve the quality of the education system. How are we doing that? By adding more teachers to the system—1,100 more teachers added this year; by reducing class sizes in the early grades—1,300 schools across this province have already seen reduced class sizes; by launching a new literacy and numeracy secretariat to improve results in literacy and math. We are providing teachers with mentoring support for up to 2,000 teachers across our system; better training and classroom resources for teachers, a very important initiative; 8,000 lead teachers now in our classrooms across Ontario;

7,500 teachers trained last summer in literacy and math to provide a better opportunity, to give them a better ability to teach our kids. That's going to have a big impact in the classrooms. It's going to have a big impact on the results we are seeking. We have also sent turnaround teams into our struggling schools, to try to help them upgrade the experience for our young people.

Let's look at the role that schools have played in our communities through the years: the community use of schools. The previous government brought in a funding formula that absolutely destroyed the ability of our boards of education to allow schools to be open to community groups: groups like Scouts and Guides, sporting groups, before- and after-school groups, seniors groups, access to schools for community meetings. All of that was destroyed right across this province. But our Minister of Tourism has come forward with new funding for schools, \$20 million being allocated, to return schools to their rightful place in our community as the hub of activity, the place where young people can go after school for after-school programs, recreational programs, Scouts, Guides and all those kinds of things, returning schools to their rightful place in our neighbourhoods.

The previous government allowed schools to deteriorate in terms of their capital use. They allowed schools to deteriorate to the point where some people were comparing some of our schools to Third World schools. I don't know if it was that bad, but they were pretty bad. They needed investment, and our government has come forward with investment: \$2 billion has been set up in a fund to repair our crumbling schools. That's going to make a big difference across the system. As I speak to the teachers I know, they are very much looking forward to seeing their work environments, and the environments that our young people are learning in, upgraded over the next number of years.

The teacher-bashing approach has led to probably the worst record in modern governmental history here in this province when it comes to missing days of school because of labour relations. Under the previous government, there were more days missed in school than under the two previous governments combined.

This government is taking a different approach. We're working toward peace and harmony in our education system, and this legislation is a step in the right direction. Bill 167 continues to build on the atmosphere of peace and stability that our new approach is building throughout our school system. Two- or preferably four-year contracts will contribute to that stability and allow for better long-term planning to focus on student achievement rather than negotiations.

The results are already being felt in our education system. Teachers are already getting onside for this new approach we're taking to education, and we're going to see the results in the coming years, as our students achieve more and more in things like math and literacy and as we build a stronger, better job market and a stronger, more skilled, better-educated workforce for our future.

1600

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It's interesting to listen to the debate today and to the different sides that are being put forward. The Liberals say there's going to be peace and stability in the school system. I don't see how we're going to have peace and stability when 29 of 31 teachers' unions have voted to go on strike for this. In Kawartha Pine Ridge, one of the districts in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, 99% of the teachers voted to go on strike. In the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, over 80% voted to go on strike. I stopped into the elementary school office the other day. They're not happy. They don't look peaceful and contented. They say the government's ripping them off. They're in negotiations. What is Minister Kennedy going to do? The only real purpose of this legislation that we're debating today is to save the government the embarrassment of having to deal with the teachers and the contracts in 2007.

It's starting to be a very significant date in our calendars, 2007. Isn't that the next provincial election? That's right, they did keep that one promise—October 4, 2007. That's the year all the ribbons, I think, are going to be cut all over. They're trying to avoid as many potential problems as possible, so it's not a surprise that 2007 is the date that the Liberals—oh, that's right; they're opening that casino, the Papatello palace, over in Windsor. That's going to be open now.

Anyway, some have observed of the provincial government that they'll avoid any labour trouble at any cost. I don't know. There are going to be a lot of pickets out there, and not just from the teachers; look at the hospitals, the nurses and the doctors. They're getting it on all fronts. The Premier's office thinks it's going to be bad politics for trouble to erupt on the education front. The education Premier; that's what he's called. I'm remembering that for when the Rae report comes out. We'll see how many dollars are put in the budget in order to implement the Rae report.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to comment especially about the member from Etobicoke Centre. I listened to both of the Liberal members speak, but the member from Etobicoke Centre said something that I do not believe I can simply allow to stand. She said that teachers and their unions look out for their own best interests and not necessarily for the interests of the children, because that's the role and nature of unions.

I would beg to differ. I have to stand up on behalf of the tens of thousands of teachers in this province. I have never met a single teacher in my life who goes out to look for their own best interests first. They look out for each and every child who's under their authority inside the classroom, they give untold hours of their own time and money to make sure the system works, they take educational upgrading in order to make sure they are current, and I have seen them help poor and injured children. I have seen them do everything in their power to look after those children.

In terms of the unions themselves of which the teachers are members, yes, they have an obligation to look out for their members. This is a type of work where they are in a very stressful environment, some would even say far more stressful than it is in this House on many occasions. They constantly have demands upon them and they deserve to be well paid. They deserve to have good working conditions. That is why they organized and that is why they have the unions.

The teachers' unions especially, all of them, are very different from what the member described. She is describing some kind of Gompertian American system where you're in it for what you can get, but I would tell you that I think the teachers are far beyond that. They have developed a whole system; they know they are part of the solution to the problems there. They work very hard with the school boards, with the province and with everyone else to deliver and be part of what is best for the children.

I don't think the member should be making statements to that effect. Yes, they have a self-interest, but they are as interested in the children of this province every bit as much as are the politicians in this room.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): It gives me pleasure to spend a couple of minutes speaking to Bill 167. We are talking a lot about peace and harmony within the system. I have to tell you that after you have been beaten up on a lot and there is a lot of pain in the process, after eight years of being beaten up on, it takes a long time for people to come to a comfort level. You know that with your own kids. If you were to smack your kids around all the time—no one in this House would do that, but there are people who do—what would you expect from them? You'd expect them to react. If you treat them with a little more gentleness and kindness, over a period of time they will come around to acting and responding in the responsible way that teachers in our system do.

The concerns over timing: Two- and four-year contracts provide a couple of opportunities. One is to provide some stability in the system, because one-year contracts would be like one-year contracts here. It's tough enough to get anything done during a mandate, let alone in a one-year time frame. But the two- and four-year time frames provide opportunity for reasonable negotiations, for reasonable provision of service. It also provides an opportunity that doesn't exist now with three-year mandates and fixed time frames, where all the teachers across the province will be negotiating at the same time. This provides the teachers' groups an opportunity to select based on what's in the best interests of their communities, the best interests of them as members, and also the opportunity over a period of time to do the comparative analysis as to what's happening in other parts of the province. With contracts not all coming up together, at the same time, one can compare and say, "What are the strengths of a contract and the weaknesses of others?"

I think time will prove during the course of this mandate that the relationship we have been building with

teachers will be fruitful and that we will have contracts signed that they will be happy with, as will their students, which is most important, as well as the boards.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise again and speak on Bill 167, another bill that was not needed very badly, except for politically partisan purposes. I can think of more important things we should be discussing. Why wouldn't we spend a little bit of time doing, say, an agricultural bill to help our farmers? How many thousands were out here yesterday complaining? Here we are worried about what time the expiry date of the next contract is going to be. We want to make sure it's not going to happen in 2007. That's what it's all about.

I give the government credit for one purpose: They've stuck to their message pretty well through these first few days of debate. You haven't caved in on that. For some reason you've missed the point on that one.

The bottom line is that there are many more things that are very important to discuss here, and I certainly hope that next week there is a major announcement to help the agricultural community. Over the last few weeks, especially in all the farm meetings we had throughout January, we've seen a sector that's having a very difficult time, a sector that helped build Ontario, and a sector that I believe needs the support of this government now more than ever—not to finger-point at the Americans; not to finger-point at the previous government; not to finger-point at the federal government. We need leadership from Dalton McGuinty. We know the Minister of Agriculture isn't capable of leadership. Dalton McGuinty, the Premier, must support the farmers in our communities. We need that badly.

I don't know how many people we spoke to yesterday—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Thousands.

Mr. Dunlop: —thousands of people. There will be thousands more here next week. I hope they can keep coming. I hope they can afford gasoline to get here, because we need to support this very important segment of our society that has been let down by this government.

1610

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Cansfield: It's interesting; it's not very often that the member from Beaches-East York has selective hearing. I said that the teachers' union has a job to do. You know, I am one of those people who had for a number of years lived through that social contract and lived through the previous government's analysis, if you like, of how and what a teacher should be. I can tell you that neither of them did anything in terms of supporting teachers in the classroom in either of those two instances. So get the record straight on that one.

I gushed when Haliburton-Victoria—"ripping them off"? Would you like to hear what ripping off is? Ripping off is having someone stand in this House and determine that a teacher is just about the next thing to incarnate evil. That's what happened for a number of years on the other side. And then to turn around and say to those teachers

that you're going to be the ones who are going to fix the system, after you told them that they were the ones who broke it to begin with—there is a lot of work to be done with the teacher in the classroom to repair the damages that have been done for a lot of years.

But certainly this has nothing to do with that; this has to do with union contracts. It has to do with a union that has a job on behalf of the members they serve, of which they must be a member. It has to do with school boards, who sit down at a bargaining table to work out the parameters under which these people continue to work. So I don't think we should be messing things around in terms of teachers and teachers' unions. This is a union issue and a school board issue on how to sit down and do bargaining.

I think that at the end of the day what we really want is the best interests of those kids. If we can find a way to change that bargaining so that it all doesn't occur on the same date, then it's an opportunity where we can do this maybe with some of that peace in the valley that has been missing for a long, long time in this province.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and debate on Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act, so that contracts don't come due in election year. As has been pointed out in this assembly by a number of our members, that's probably a more appropriate title. The government, if this legislation were to pass, would simply be shifting the dates of contracts expiry outside of the election year.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): So cynical. We never even thought of that.

Mr. Hudak: You know what? My colleague the Minister of Tourism says I'm being cynical. I hadn't come to this debate with that sort of perception, but I've listened to my colleagues debate—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: You're listening to Garfield.

Mr. Hudak: Well, Simcoe North will always give me good advice, but I also heard it from Beaches-East York, I believe, who talked about it as well, and he had paraphrased the member for Lambton-Middlesex. So I have been convinced by the debate of my colleagues that this bill is probably more appropriately called "an act to amend the Education Act so that contracts expire well after the next election." I don't mean to be cynical about it, but I've been convinced. I try to enter these debates with an open mind, and unless I hear a convincing argument to the opposite, I am convinced that this is really more so politically driven—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: In your first term, you were not cynical like this.

Mr. Hudak: Honestly, I had not thought of that line until I sat down here in debate and listened to my esteemed colleagues, who have now convinced me that this bill, at its core, is to postpone the expiration of teachers' contracts until politically safely after the next election. I don't see a compelling—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I know Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge has been up in the two minutes; maybe he'll be up to speak a

bit more about it. Help me understand how the current system of the three-year contracts, passed under the previous government—we brought forward that bill—differs from four years, how the one extra year buys any additional so-called stability, other than getting you past the 2007 election?

I don't blame you. I understand behind the scenes why Don Guy—I'm trying to think of the other ones. McLaughlin—what the heck is his name?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Guy Giorno.

Mr. Hudak: No, that's the other one. But there is an irony, right?

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: I had these all figured out, too, because I used to sit in the Minister of Tourism's old seat, and these things would pop up. There was a Don Guy; there was—it's a Scottish name. David—

Mr. Dunlop: MacNaughton.

Mr. Hudak: MacNaughton. They're shrugging their shoulders. "Never heard of him," they're saying over there. He doesn't sit in their caucus meetings. "I don't know who this MacNaughton fellow is."

So Don Guy—and Gerald Butts. That's the other one. The Butts, MacNaughton and Guy axis of politics has decided that it's appropriate—

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Axis of evil.

Mr. Hudak: I didn't say that. There is some heckling. Axis of politics.

The MacNaughton, Butts and Guy triumvirate has determined it is an appropriate use of the Legislature's time to delay the renewal of the teachers' contracts until after the next election. If I had to put myself in their place, in those three big stuffed chairs in the Premier's office where they're making all these decisions, I can understand why, because there is a great deal of—

Ms. Churley: Would you have done the same thing?

Mr. Hudak: I don't remember such chairs. I think they're new and they're red and they're plush leather—in my imagination, anyway.

No wonder they're trying to do that. It's because of the considerable dissatisfaction with the leadership and lack of planning by the McGuinty government—and health care. There are a few things that they clearly campaigned on. One was to keep their promises. Not to beat a pit bull when it's down, but they've broken over 40-some promises to date. So this notion that Dalton McGuinty would be a new-style politician who would keep his promises and such, well, that went out the window along with their campaign platform as soon as he got the keys to the Premier's limousine.

The other aspect you would expect them to focus on would be improving health care. You certainly hear the rhetoric from the health minister saying that they're improving health care. In fact, they increased taxes substantially, at a punishing level to working families in Ontario. My colleague here beside me will talk about the opposite of progressivity, whatever that is, in this taxation, where a working mother of modest income with

children would pay a substantially higher increase in her percentage of taxes as a result of the Dalton McGuinty health tax, while a millionaire would probably pay less than a 1% increase in taxes as a result. A dual working family, a typical family in any of our ridings, together, if both spouses are working, would pay more in health tax than somebody making \$4 million. They would pay \$900 in health tax, whereas the \$4-million wage earner would pay \$900—and they would pay more than that.

So there doesn't seem to be—maybe people will correct me if I'm wrong—any comprehension whatsoever of improvements in the health care system. I would say that if you ask the average person on the street, that individual would say that we're paying more and getting less in services.

If they're not making any progress on the health care front—in fact, they're going backwards—and if Premier McGuinty has lost any credibility in doing what he said he was going to do—in fact, people expect the opposite—it might be a wise strategy for Dalton McGuinty to promise things he's not going to do, because then you know he'll do something different if he gets back into office. A bit of reverse psychology might be an interesting part of the next platform.

Since health care is going to pot in Ontario and the Premier's credibility has been shot, I guess they wanted to concentrate on education and try to quiet things down in the education sector. But I still don't really understand why a four-year contract is that much different from a three-year contract in terms of the stability the government purports to be after. My colleague from Oak Ridges has brought forward his own private member's bill, which I think was 172—

Mr. Dunlop: Bill 172, and that makes sense.

Mr. Hudak: It's Bill 172, which my colleague from Simcoe North says makes a lot of sense. If I understand the bill correctly, it would allow for three-year contracts, which has been the request, I believe, of OECTA. The Catholic teachers' association has suggested that a three-year contract is most appropriate. My colleague, in response to that request, has brought forward a private member's bill, which I guess would give a range of a two-year, a three-year or a four-year contract.

If this bill were truly aimed at developing stability in the education system, certainly it has been belied by the headlines we saw when this act was introduced back in December 2004. I'll give you a headline from the Woodstock Sentinel-Review on Thursday, December 9: "New Offer Won't Bring Peace, Stability: Teachers." They say quite the opposite. In fact, the article says, "... the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation provincial executive rebuffed the offer, saying Kennedy"—that's the education minister—"went over their heads in making the offer to local district executive members throughout the province."

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OSSTF president Rhonda Kimberley-Young said in a release, "In doing so, he is working against local bargaining." So if this bill is truly supposed to get at

stability and better relations with the teachers' unions, I'm actually shocked at the ineptness of how it was introduced, because obviously OSSTF, OECTA and others have responded very negatively to this legislation and the way it was introduced by the education minister over their heads, to paraphrase what was in that article.

It goes on to say, "The OSSTF feels that local bargaining is the best for local needs ... the one-size-fits-all funding formula doesn't work, and neither does one-size-fits-all provincial bargaining." That's what OSSTF says in a very angry response to the tactics of the education minister in the McGuinty Liberal government.

The St. Catharines Standard, always one of my favourite journals, Thursday, December 16, 2004, on page A11 has a headline with respect to this Bill 167: "Minister Interfered with Bargaining: Teachers." The first line of that report says, "The union representing Ontario secondary school teachers has filed a complaint." Not only have they done a release and communicated directly to the minister—they're upset, Mr. Speaker—but they also went so far as to file "a complaint against the provincial education minister, accusing him of interfering in the bargaining process."

Fun with headlines continues. The National Post, also one of my favourite journals, on Wednesday, December 8, by Lee Greenberg, a very hard-working journalist—

Ms. Churley: He's a good journalist.

Mr. Hudak: He is. My colleague says he's a good journalist; I agree. He's very hard-working, young and energetic. Lee Greenberg, in a story, says, "Teachers to be Offered Choice of Two- to Four-Year Contracts: Kennedy Proposing Pay Hikes of 2% to 3%." When Greenberg asked the teachers' federation what they said, Emily Noble, the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, was quoted as saying, "Mr. Kennedy's offer of 2% was 'on the low side,'" and that teachers would be asking for raises between 3% and 3.5% per annum.

I won't dwell much longer on the headlines following the minister's release of his letter, later followed up by Bill 167, but suffice it to say that the teachers' unions have reacted very negatively to this legislation. So you wonder that a bill that's supposed to create stability in the system would get off to such a rough start and get such a rough ride.

I know my colleague from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, a very hard-working member, is fighting to make sure that Tim Hortons does open in Beaverton, Ontario. It's always un-Canadian to stand against a Tim Hortons, with this greenbotch bill it's unpatriotic to try to stop a Tim Hortons from coming to small-town Ontario, but in this greenbotch mess created by the McGuinty Liberal government, a Tim Hortons may be stopped as it's trying to land in Beaverton, Ontario. I hope it ain't so but I fear it may be so.

Maybe Tim Hortons should have gone to the \$10,000-a-plate fundraiser. Maybe that big, inflatable Tim Hortons coffee mug could have gone there. They could have brought along a \$10,000 box of Timbits. Maybe that

would have greased the wheels a little bit and we might have had a different answer on boundaries in Beaverton, but I fear the local owner of the Tim Hortons—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With respect to my colleague from Erie-Lincoln, standing order 23(b)(i) suggests that perhaps he may wish to address the topic under discussion.

The Acting Speaker: I'll make that decision, thank you. The Chair recognizes the member from Erie-Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying that when the leaders of the local federations of education—teachers—are meeting in Beaverton, they'd probably enjoy going to this Tim Hortons if it had been built, but in fact the greenbotch legislation has prevented that Tim Hortons from ever being constructed.

I don't want to tease my colleague from Mississauga West. I don't know if he was a tattle-tale when he was in school, but I do appreciate that he was listening closely to my remarks.

Ms. Churley: You were getting under his skin.

Mr. Hudak: I didn't mean to.

Ms. Churley: You were getting too close to the truth.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Toronto-Danforth suggests I was getting too close to the truth, and that's why we had their rebuttal. But very real questions have been raised in the Legislature in question period these last few days, and have dominated the media coverage of debate in this place with respect to a \$10,000-per-person fundraiser and the impact that may have had on greenbelt boundaries. Certainly, the government's unwillingness to bring forward the science behind that plan gives credence to that question, that these boundaries are based more on political science than real science.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Erie-Lincoln, we're dealing with the Education Act.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you. Sometimes you get worked up about what happened in question period a couple of hours ago and it's hard to let go. You're right; I will get back. But you do wonder.

Let me go on about the purported stability in education, as my colleague—that's how I got on the topic. I was talking about how my colleague from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock had referenced the number of teachers' federations and boards that are currently in strike positions. They're planning for strikes. Twenty-nine of 31 boards, I understand, are in a strike position. A number of others are beginning on Monday, I believe—here in the city of Toronto, in the capital of the province of Ontario—a work-to-rule campaign, both the teachers and the support staff.

Maybe they don't know enough about Bill 167. Maybe if the Minister of Education made a lot of photocopies of Bill 167 and took it down to the federation headquarters, they would change their mind and realize that this is all about peace in the classroom. I think they would have some suggestions about what to do with that paper. The minister used some particular language in question period. They would probably say the same

thing, or even stronger, to the Minister of Education if he made that suggestion.

I wonder too—I know my colleague from Simcoe North spoke about this earlier on. When we were debating Bill 167, the act to amend the Education Act so contracts expire after the next provincial election, he talked about the curiosity about why we are debating this particular bill when there are real and growing concerns, whether it's about the greenbelt and how the boundaries were decided, the plight of farmers in the province of Ontario or health care in the province.

I remember when this so-called special session of the Legislature was called to meet in February and into March, which, while not rare, is not common. The government, in its spin—I remember watching CP24 and seeing the spin about the government's intentions in the new session, which were going to concentrate on pit bull bans and the film classification system in the province of Ontario.

I'm glad to be here. I'm glad to be here in the Legislature. I'm glad to be bringing the issues of concern with Bill 167, the concerns of the good people of Erie-Lincoln in the province of Ontario. But I bet if you asked a hundred of those residents in Erie-Lincoln what they thought the priorities for the session should be, very few—in fact, none—would have said the film classification system and modernizing that in the province of Ontario. And I think only those who have pit bulls or dogs like them, that are part of their families, who are not happy with what this legislation is going to do, would probably highlight the pit bull legislation, hoping it would be defeated. Otherwise, I don't think, back home, when they knew we were coming in for a so-called special session of the Legislature, they would have expected us to be debating film classification, pit bull bans or Bill 167, the act to amend the Education Act so contracts expire after the next election.

There's plenty of time until after the next election, so why do these bills have priority over issues like addressing investments in health care, recruiting doctors to underserved areas or helping our farmers in facing the lowest prices for grain and oilseeds in 25 years? Many are affected by the greenbelt legislation. Why those wouldn't be the priorities instead is beyond me.

Even in education, we've had a couple of ideas brought forward by the Minister of Education. One is to make sure the contracts go after the next provincial election. Whether that was Minister Kennedy's idea or part of the Butts-MacNaughton-Guy triumvirate, I'm not sure. It could have been a coalition of those forces that is now compelling us to debate this particular bill today.

The Minister of Education has also talked about one of his first priorities as Minister of Education: banning gummi bears, hunting down every last gummi bear from the halls of the schools of the province; a spring bear hunt on gummi bears, making sure parents would pat down their kids so they wouldn't be sneaking a Snickers bar into the classroom as they went off to school. Sure, it's important to encourage good eating habits in young

people and adults. Certainly, I could do better at that, as I pull my jacket tighter around my waist.

1630

Ms. Churley: They can have fresh sushi now.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague does point out that now they can have fresh sushi in the schools. But the emphasis on this window dressing or these distractions, like banning junk food as the highest priority of the Minister of Education—I thought he would have brought other initiatives forward first. I thought he would have done more things to improve the quality of education rather than changing a three-year contract to a four-year contract. I'm not entirely sure why that's a priority.

I would have been much more impressed by a Minister of Education who looked at the quality of education in the classroom; in fact, it has been the opposite. We've seen the Minister of Education, who introduced Bill 167, also concentrate on watering down literacy standards in Ontario so that students will no longer have to pass both components of the literacy test.

We've also heard the minister talk about watering down the College of Teachers. The College of Teachers is there to ensure there are high standards in the classroom, in the profession. The minister has talked about watering down the role of colleges and also lowering the requirements of standardized testing and abolishing teacher testing in the province.

I think he at one time talked about, instead of Bill 167, bringing forward at least some alternative to the teacher-testing system that was already before the province, but instead he eliminated that but has brought nothing in return, no replacement.

So teacher testing, making sure we have high standards for the college, high standards of testing in the classroom and the literacy test—all watered down under this Minister of Education. He will triumph with stability, but at the same time sacrificing quality in the classroom, which I find highly regrettable.

My last point: I'll look forward to the budget—I think a lot of us will—to see what the McGuinty deficit is actually going to be for this year. But to see if they can actually pay for this program is another topic entirely, which I can't fully address in 10 seconds, but I do understand the cost to the system is well over \$2.5 billion under Bill 167.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Ms. Churley: It's my pleasure to respond to—I was testing you to see if you could remember my riding, Mr. Speaker, and you did. Thank you.

I wanted to comment for a couple of minutes in response to the member for Erie-Lincoln. We seem to be working together a lot these days.

Mr. Hudak: Good team.

Ms. Churley: We are; we don't agree on every point. I have to say to the public and to the government that I supported the government in their efforts to ban junk food from schools because—

Mr. Hudak: It's not a priority.

Ms. Churley: Well, you know, it could be done very quickly, in fact, because it's something I think we all support. For me, it would be a priority that shouldn't have to take very long.

But I was extremely amused when the member for Mississauga West, I think, stood up on a point of order to try to shut you down, member from Erie-Lincoln, when you started to talk about—and I'm going to submit, Speaker, that there is a connection. When the member started to speak about this legislation and talk about what happened in question period today on democratic renewal—this is all about democratic renewal, or lack thereof, because we well know that what this bill is all about is avoiding any problems with the teachers and their unions during the election date that the government has cherry-picked. Out of everything they had to say about moving forward on a new democratic renewal agenda, all they've done so far—and they still haven't brought forward legislation—is pick a date, October 4, 2007, for the next election. They haven't come forward yet with what they promised, and that is real-time disclosure.

Today, we have a bill that's connected to all of this. Talk about transparency today. This is one of the most transparent bills I've ever seen, because what is so transparent is that the government is bringing forward a bill that's very important to them to make sure that they have peace and stability, no bargaining going on in an election year. A couple of the members from the Liberals even admitted it. So in fact the member was right on when he connected the two.

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm amazed to hear some of the comments from the opposition members with respect to our education agenda, given the incredible lengths to which our education minister has shown leadership on the education file, out there rebuilding trust among our teachers, parents, students, boards, administrators—the list goes on and on. I think when we compare historically what has taken place in the education sector with the past two governments, the comparison is strikingly obvious. We had the NDP government, who ripped up the collective agreements of thousands of teachers. I can say that first-hand, as one of those teachers who had my contract ripped up, thank you very much. We had the Conservative government, whose education minister set out to create a crisis in education. That is certainly not our idea of rebuilding trust in the education sector. We had the private tax credit sucking \$500 million out of the public education system. We had them taking over boards of education like Ottawa, Hamilton and Toronto.

I'm so pleased that there is a breath of fresh air with our government's policies in the education sector and the work that we are doing to rebuild the trust and the positive relationship with our teachers and education workers. Bill 167 puts into place an option for education workers and our boards to agree to longer contracts, four-year contracts. Teachers, parents and students want greater stability in the education system.

Ms. Churley: We have no choice.

Mr. Orazietti: I hear some of our opposition members. Perhaps they don't want greater stability in the education sector, but we certainly do, and we're proud of our investments: \$1.1 billion of new money into the education system to date; \$280 million leveraging \$4 billion in school infrastructure renewal funding; smaller class sizes; 1,100 new teachers; literacy and numeracy specialty training. Our government is doing a very remarkable job, I believe, in renewing the relationship with our education workers.

Ms. Scott: I rise to comment on the remarks by my colleague the member for Erie-Lincoln and the agenda that the Liberals have.

The Minister of Education, by doing this—this is not a choice, as the member opposite has said. A choice? There is no choice. As he said, the Minister of Education is letting down the teachers, he's letting down the unions, he's letting down the parents.

This is a very short bill but it has been a big controversy. It is not going to bring peace and stability. My colleague from Oak Ridges rose on that point of privilege when we first came back and asked the Speaker to find the Minister of Education in contempt of the Legislature. He did it because the Minister of Education wrote a letter on November 29 of last year to the school boards and the directors instructing them to negotiate four-year contracts with teachers. There wasn't a choice in there; there wasn't the three-year. He said a four-year contract with teachers. On the same day, he wrote to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation local bargaining unit, asking them, or instructing them, to do the same. This all happened before the minister had the legislative authority to do so. He was instructing them to ignore the legislation that exists on the three-year contracts that was in place when he wrote that letter. Now, the Speaker has ruled that it is not in fact a situation where a contempt of the Legislature took place, but I think it is certainly something that should give all of us legislators pause. He also made it known how much money he thinks should be spent on teachers' contracts. I think that's taking flexibility away from the school boards and the unions. It is not treating them with respect at all.

So we will see what happens with this bill. I'm happy to see that the Chair of Management Board is reading the Rae report over there, and I'm hoping he is planning to transfer some money, as was promised and as the education Premier said. We haven't quite got his attention yet, but we are trying, so I hope that he does read the Rae review and put the money into post-secondary education that was promised.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Actually, there were people who objected to the member for Erie-Lincoln wandering from the topic. I'm happy he did, because I have a chance now to speak

about some of the things he spoke about when he was in there.

What I can't figure out is this: His new leader—I know he didn't vote for him; he fought hard against John Tory. He fought very hard against him. I think he was in Mr. Flaherty's camp at that time. Sorry to use their names, but they were running for office. John Tory always likes to portray himself as an environmentalist, and I heard the member mention the word "greenbelt," so this opened it right up. But I remember he was an environmentalist, and he would go to the Pollution Probe dinners and be nice to the environmentalists around Toronto, particularly. And when he had a chance to make a choice in Ontario for a greenbelt, something that's for the future of this province, he decided he would get sidetracked by the right-wing rump of the Conservative Party. I'm not going to mention any names, but the right-wing rump has obviously taken over. That's not you, Mr. Speaker.

1640

So John Tory, who wants to portray himself as a moderate to the people, whether it is to the teachers out there or whether it is to the people who believe in protecting the environment—he just doesn't do it, because he gets sidetracked constantly. I know the member for Kitchener–Waterloo probably tries to get some moderate words in his ear, and he doesn't seem to listen to her, unfortunately. He's trapped by the right-wing caucus that he's stuck with at the present time. That's most unfortunate. I don't know who is influencing him to be against this greenbelt legislation, based largely, if I look at it, on the old official plans that came out of the Conservative government back in 1979 and 1980. But John Tory, who wants to be the moderate, has been hijacked by the extreme right wing of the Conservative Party.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr. Hudak: Thank you to all my colleagues. The member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock did talk to the member for Sault Ste. Marie's point that they have a choice in contracts. Well, sure, you have a choice of a four-year contract or two two-year contracts that add up to four years, and if you make the wrong choice, the minister, under the bill, can deem it into a four-year contract. So please don't tell me about choice in this bill—quite the opposite.

My colleague from St. Catharines, I know, would want to back a greenbelt that would be successful for generations to come. I know my colleague was a strong supporter of the Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris that brought in Ontario's Living Legacy, the biggest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of the province. I would expect, if I looked at the voting record, that the member from St. Catharines supported the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, which was recognized by the Environmental Commissioner as a leading piece of legislation that should be modelled. I know my colleague as well is a big champion of the Niagara Escarpment Protection Act, which was also done, not in my time, but under a

Progressive Conservative government. I think Dalton McGuinty really has green envy. He put out his greenbelt greenbotch—or maybe even, with all these allegations of donations, greenbought—because he wanted to try to measure up to our record.

But I'll tell you, when Progressive Conservatives do preservation initiatives, we do them right. We make sure it's based on real environmental science and a plan to make sure it's successful so it lasts the tests of time, as the Oak Ridges conservation act will, the Niagara Escarpment plan has and the Living Legacy will. I do fear—and the OPPI is on my side, the professional planners, who say that the greenbelt as a land use policy alone will not be successful. I argue it will unravel unless you have a real support plan for farmers in the greenbelt, unless it's based truly on science.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I think if David Suzuki actually looked at the science, he'd be the first, because nobody has seen the science behind the greenbelt legislation.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, March 7, in the afternoon, we will be debating Bill 136. In the evening, we'll be debating Bill 167.

On Tuesday, March 8, in the afternoon, Bill 136; in the evening, the interim supply bill.

On Wednesday, March 9, in the afternoon, Bill 158.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

(continued)

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

(suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Ms. Churley: I got nervous for a minute. I was counting the members of the opposition in here right now and thinking—oh, you stood up, Mr. Speaker. When you stand up, I'm supposed to sit down.

I was frightened when the minister got up, because I was counting opposition and thinking, "Oh, my heavens"—I shouldn't tell them, should I?—"somebody get in here. We haven't got five people to stand up here."

Hon. Mr. Bradley: That's Thursday afternoon for you.

Ms. Churley: That's Thursday afternoon for you; that's right. And I have a very important event to go to in my riding, which I think Minister Smitherman is at: the Brickworks. The Brickworks is something that, when the NDP was in government, we funded despite the recession. We funded the first stage of that. Gary Malkowski, who was our member from East York at the time, did a

tremendous job in bringing that forward. I'm looking forward to joining Minister Smitherman and Michael Prue and others there as soon as I finish my speech here today, but I did want to have this opportunity.

I spoke earlier in the two-minute response. The guy who raised the point of order is in the chair now so I don't have to—well, maybe I do have to worry. He's in the chair. He can stand up any time. But you know I will stay on topic, as the member for St. Catharines says. I always stay on topic.

I'm going to make the connection I made earlier, because there is a connection to what we were talking about in question period today. This is really part of democratic renewal, in that this bill is not really about education or fixing the problems in education, for which the government has no plans whatsoever. So what are we doing here today? We're dealing with a bill that is actually making sure that the problems around negotiations and contracts don't happen in the year of the election, which has been picked—no legislation yet. I suppose there could be a crisis that could prevent that from happening if times are particularly tough.

What this is all about is that the government has cherry-picked, out of its so-called democratic renewal agenda, an election date without any of the other pieces brought forward yet. We still haven't seen anything around the committee the minister responsible set up, but they've picked a date. Then they started looking at that date and realized, "Oh, some problems could happen on that date in 2007. We've got teachers' contracts coming up. We all know how divisive and difficult those can be, and we don't want that happening in an election year. So we're going to have to fix that." That is exactly what this bill is all about. Because the Liberals have no plan to fix the problems in education, here we are trying to hide the problems by delaying negotiations until after the next election.

It is not just us saying this. Two of my favourite members from the Liberal Party—I've had an opportunity to work with both of them, and in particular the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. She is a really wonderful, friendly, honest human being and I quite enjoy working with her. She had to carry the greenbelt bill for the minister through the committee hearings. She was very sympathetic to many of my amendments. I'm coming back to that—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Well, everybody seems to be talking about the greenbelt. She did a great job and she was sympathetic to my amendments, but unfortunately orders came down from on high, from the minister's office, and she wasn't able to support them. She stood up today and admitted, along with the member from Markham, that this is about an election year. They came right out and said it. At least they are honest about it, saying that, honestly, in their view, "It's a good thing because we want to have peace and stability in the election year." They said it. So now that you have members from your own caucus admitting it, why not just admit it? It's so

transparent that it's funny. I think it's the most transparent bill we've ever seen in this place in terms of what you're trying to achieve.

There is all kinds of important legislation that we're waiting to have introduced in this House, waiting to debate. I bring it back to the question we were asking today and I've asked many times in this Legislature, and that is, where is the government bill on real-time disclosure of political donations? Instead of debating that today, we're standing here debating a bill that simply allows the government to get itself out of difficult contract negotiations in an election year.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Like the social contract, Marilyn?

Ms. Churley: If you want to talk about the social contract, that certainly wasn't buying us out of trouble, like this bill is. We walked deeply right in the middle of it, didn't we? You guys are just trying to walk away from trouble. Maybe it's smart. I'm not saying it's not smart politically to do, but I remember what Liberals said when they were the official opposition and the Tories were across there doing similar things. Let's see. What was it that Gerard Kennedy said, who was then the critic for education? He slammed the Tories for doing the same thing: for trying to put off any potential teachers' strike until after the election.

1650

Here's what he said in a debate in 2001: "Today, they'll say, 'We demand there be a three-year contract. We demand that that happen so there are no untoward activities around the time of the next election.'" That's what Gerard Kennedy said then. But of course this is now.

Let's see what else Gerard Kennedy, the education minister, who was then the critic, said back then. Before the election, he said that dictating the length of contracts was heavy-handed. Again I quote Gerard Kennedy, education minister, when he was in opposition: "You think you're going to fix problems in education, many of them of your own making, by ordering people around. You're going to boss them, you're going to make them do things and, in this case, you're going to get three-year contracts just because you say so." That's what Gerard Kennedy, the education minister, who was then the critic, said then. But of course this is now.

As has been mentioned, a member from the Conservatives has already filed a complaint with the Speaker because Mr. Kennedy, the education minister, had been telling boards and teachers to negotiate two- and four-year deals even before it became law. Talk about bossing the teachers around to their own advantage. The bargaining has now been thrown into chaos because boards and teachers don't know whether to follow the current law or Kennedy's bill.

What we should be debating here today are the chaos and the problems in the schools. When the Liberals were in opposition, talk about beating up on the Conservatives at the time. I see Elizabeth Witmer is in the House. Weren't you the education minister? She was the education minister for a while and took the brunt of the vicious

attacks coming from the then critic for education. Sometimes he would make it up. It was incredible. He would make up numbers and facts. I remember; it was just incredible.

I am not going to let Ms. Witmer and the Tories off the hook. I think they made a terrible mess of the education system in this province. But the Liberals aren't doing, as they promised, any better. We're starting to have chaos in the system as we speak. We're going to have a work-to-rule here in Toronto, starting next week.

When the Tories were in power, I'm sure Cathy Dandy from the Toronto Parent Network was a thorn in their side. Now she's a thorn in the Liberals' side, because she is there for the kids and for our schools. She doesn't care who is in government, who her friends are, she's got a job to do, and that is to work with the parents and the teachers to make sure that our schools are in the best of shape. I heard Cathy Dandy on the radio this morning, talking about the fact that the Liberals aren't doing what they said they were going to do and fulfilling their obligations and promises from the Rozanski report, and that the schools are still very underfunded. The Toronto Parent Network and others are demanding that the government keep their promise, put their money where their mouth is and help pay back some of the money that—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Oh, money, money.

Ms. Churley: The member for St. Catharines says, "Oh, money, money." Man, when they were in government—I've got to tell you, how the world turns when an opposition party goes on the other side.

Let me tell you about some of the problems, because they haven't fulfilled their promises to fully refund the money that the Tories took out on the Rozanski benchmarks that are still underfunded. In their 2004 tracking report, People for Education—that's Annie Kidder and many others; again, a thorn in the side of any government in power that is letting the kids down, our schools down and the teachers down—notes that school board requirements for salaries and benefits are 10% higher than the funding formula presently provides. Again, when they were in opposition they were screaming at the government then, telling them that the funding formula was flawed and they needed to fix it. Now that they have the opportunity to do that, they are not doing it; instead, what we have is this bill before us today to try to cover up these problems, to try to make sure there isn't chaos during an election year.

In his letter, the Minister of Education claims that future increases will take the real cost of paying teachers into account, but he makes absolutely no commitment on the current underfunding of the base. The \$10 million that the minister set aside is a fraction of the money recommended by the Rosanski report on education funding.

As we all know, a very respected economist, Hugh Mackenzie, did a lot of hard work and research and updated the Rosanski benchmarks. These are the conclusions he came to: that areas are still very underfunded—

in particular, foundation teacher salaries, \$396.1 million underfunded; foundation non-teacher salaries, \$100.6 million underfunded; foundation benefits, \$196.8 million underfunded; and salaries and benefits underfunding totals \$693.5 million.

We recently had a report about underfunding of small schools. Despite Liberal promises to save small schools, they keep closing. On January 26—I was at a press conference recently about this—the Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay announced plans to close 14 schools in the next two years.

The Minister of Education knows full well, from when he was in opposition, that the funding formula—and he said it over and over again—has to change to protect small schools. In fact, on January 27, the education minister promised that he would reveal a plan to save small schools "next week" that would include "substantial changes" to the funding formula. Now, nearly a month later, Kennedy—I should say, "the Minister of Education"—and the Premier revealed a plan that had—guess what?—no changes to the funding formula and, in fact, once again was a reannouncement of a capital funding scheme introduced last May. Not a single penny of that money has flowed to school boards since it was first announced.

So members from the backbench, as they've been doing today, can get up and brag about all the great things the present government has done, but in fact, when you look at the promises that were made and what has really happened, you will see that the Liberals have fulfilled very little of substance in terms of the promises they made and what we know our schools need in order to be viable again.

They also promised to reinvest in transportation, but no, we're not talking about that today. We're not talking about fixing the funding formula; we're not talking about the chaos that's already starting in our schools; we're not talking about the broken promise on reinvesting in transportation. We all know that since 1997, since the funding formula came in place, it was not sufficiently funded. The Liberals have proposed changes in a document called Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario, a fancy title, but we all know—we've spoken about this—that we should be debating these things today. The result is not equitable. Thirty-one school boards will have an allocation for 2005-06 that is less than the amount—

Interjection: That's on topic?

Ms. Churley: We're talking about education; yes, we are. But I could give you some education on what you—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Well, that means you're not listening, are you? You should be listening, because you're not properly funding the education system, and that's what I'm talking about now.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Speaker, is really—he has no sense of humour. He's always whining and complaining and standing up and mouthing the government lines. But he's always surly and unpleasant.

Anyway, I would say to him that as a result, more than 30 boards of education will lose funds for buses, beginning in 2005-06.

1700

I've got a couple of minutes left, and I just want to talk about the fact that the boards simply will not have the money to cover the cost of salaries. That's what we should be talking about today. This government is starting to micromanage, making them make detailed reports. The Minister of Education is again hoping to shift the blame away—exactly what the Tories did; you did—from the Liberal government and on to school boards.

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: You were upfront about it, put it that way. The Tories were upfront about it. The Liberals, as always, are trying to have it both ways.

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: I've already mentioned that they admitted what's going on here today. But before the election, the Liberals claimed this sort of micromanagement was bad. They said, "The Harris-Eves government tries to run 5,000 schools from Queen's Park.... We will ensure that" school boards "have the resources and the flexibility in spending those resources to respond to local needs." That was in the Liberal plan for education.

Now, I'm very disappointed to say that what we have here today is a situation where the Liberals are engaged in the same tactics as the Conservatives, creating time-consuming accountability measures that do little for students but shift political blame away from the government.

I want to say as well that I was concerned to hear the member for Etobicoke Centre and her analysis in this House of teachers and teachers' unions.

Mr. Oraziatti: I thought it was excellent.

Ms. Churley: The member for Sault Ste. Marie thought it was excellent, so he supports union bashing, because that's what the member for Etobicoke Centre was saying and now we know that the member for Sault Ste. Marie supports her. This is getting better every minute.

Who else? Liberals, put up your hands. Do you support the member for Etobicoke Centre in her views on unions? Put up your hands. We have one more.

Mr. Oraziatti: She wasn't union bashing.

Ms. Churley: She certainly was. She was talking in very negative terms about teachers and the unions and certainly left the impression that they didn't care about the students, that they were just out for the union and out to get the very best deal they could for teachers at the expense of kids. That's what she was saying.

Now, after the member for Beaches-East York, my colleague, got up and I think very politely—he's more polite than I am; I admit that. I don't know how he does it sometimes, though. But he stood up—

Mrs. Cansfield: He used to be the mayor.

Ms. Churley: Oh, yes, he's used to being the mayor—and said very politely that the teachers he knows—and I

would say the same thing. Of course, we all want to do the very best in our own personal lives, but I've never seen in any profession more dedicated people than teachers, who see the kids every day in the classroom and are aware of the problems that they bring to the classroom in terms of their home lives, their abilities, their disabilities, their problems. What they need to get ahead in life is what they're concerned about. For a number of years, they've had a very stressful and difficult time doing that. There's no other profession as dedicated as teachers. I can't think of any.

I think it was really unfortunate today that the member for Etobicoke Centre, who should know better, as a former school trustee, said such negative things like that about the teachers and their unions in this province.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes for questions and comments the member from Mississauga East.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I am so excited with the McGuinty government and Minister Kennedy and what I'm feeling in the schools. We have a climate of partnership, one that we've never seen before, one of mutual respect and fairness. We see development with teachers in the schools.

Over the last few months, I've had a chance to tour a number of schools. I was in one last week, at Canadian Martyrs. I first met with the principal and the administration. They said they have never felt such a great sense of passion for learning, a climate of respect, one where teachers feel there is a government behind them. My excitement is that we are going to produce some of the greatest Ontarians that we've ever seen because of what we are doing today. We should all be very proud of that.

There is a sense of stability within the schools. I got a chance to tour many of the classrooms, and all I hear from the teachers is, "We are feeling respected. We are feeling proud about our profession. We know that you're listening and working with us to make schools a better place, a community place for better learning." They really have not seen this type of dialogue with a government in, well, let's just say in at least eight or nine years, because we know that the previous government was very antagonistic with the teachers and with the school boards. We're making sure there is a partnership where we all will benefit, and especially our kids and our youth will benefit, for the future of Ontario.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the member from Toronto-Danforth's speech. I guess what I want to start out by saying, as we discuss Bill 167, is that, very simply, the bill means only one thing: The government did not want contracts expiring in the year 2007, because they had made the previous commitment to have a provincial election in October of that year, and they didn't need the contracts expiring on August 30. They didn't need any labour disruptions or any problems. We already know that there are a number of collective bargaining units around the province that have voted for a strike action. We know that there is a work-to-rule campaign around the province as well; I believe it's right

here in one of the Metro boards. And with that, we know that the government is already feeling some pressure for some of the promises they made, and they probably won't be able to deliver. I think that's the key thing we have to put across. I know that the government has got another message, as we heard previously, but it's all about that.

There was no other reason for this legislation. There is peace and stability in the system; we don't need to have a wasted bylaw like this. It's something like bring-your-own-wine. That was a huge failure. I think there are only a dozen restaurants in the province that have opened—what have we got, thousands of restaurants, and only a dozen have decided to go with this idiotic bill? We know that the pit bull ban is a failure, and that will come back to haunt the government. We are debating this bill here today on a Thursday afternoon, when I think we should be out trying to do some legislation that would help our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, thanks again for this opportunity to make a few comments on Ms. Churley's bill, Bill 167.

Mr. Prue: Again, it is always a pleasure to comment on my colleagues here in the Legislature and on their speeches. I listened intently from my office on the television. I think that most of the members in fact look much better on television. You all have very good television personas and personalities. I watched my colleague from Toronto—Danforth as she outlined some of the problems that she saw with this bill.

Ms. Churley: Did I look good?

Mr. Prue: Yes, you looked very good. As you say, you looked "hot." You're one of those "hot" television personalities.

She looked very good, and she talked about what the real problems are. In fact, this bill is about the problems that the government is experiencing, the problems that they are experiencing and what they anticipate experiencing in the leadup to the next election. These are not difficulties that I think the minister is trying to make for himself. It is not how the minister reacts with the unions and with the teachers and the school boards, because to many of them who remember the eight previous years prior to him being the minister, this is certainly a much better atmosphere for them, and they will say so. I am not surprised when the member opposite said that he went to a school and they thought it was a little bit better.

But I think the problem is going to come home to roost, because people are expecting so much more. In Hansard, June 18, 2001, then critic for education Gerard Kennedy chided the government of the day, which was trying to institute a three-year policy. He said, "Today, they'll say, 'We demand there be a three-year contract. We demand that that happen so there are no untoward activities around the time of the next election.'"" We heard today that what is proposed in this bill is precisely the same thing that you once chided the other government for. You are afraid of the teachers, you are afraid of the unions and you are afraid of the turmoil that is going to happen in October 2007.

1710

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I wanted to stand up to remind my friend from the NDP that not too long ago, under the Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Blakeney, they imposed a bill that did not allow nurses to go on strike.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Just before an election.

Mr. Racco: Now they are complaining: "Can you believe it? Just before an election." What we're trying to say is let's have some peace and stability in the Liberal movement. Let's make a deal so that teachers will be able to teach our kids.

As you will remember, Mr. Speaker, under your government's leadership, there were millions of hours lost in education because of strikes. Many parents, especially new immigrants, could not go to work because they had to stay home to take care of their kids. Thousands and thousands of hours were lost in wages, only because there were strikes. What Bill 167 is going to do is bring peace and stability in that profession.

There is no need for people like you and me, for people who live in Thornhill and Concord, to lose days of work because some individuals go on strike. There is no reason for our kids not to have a proper education because some adults cannot make a compromise. Bill 167 will in fact minimize, if not eliminate, that possibility.

We will provide stability to the Liberal movement, contrary to the NDP government of Saskatchewan which in fact outlawed the nurses from going on strike.

This is a wise bill. It's a bill that everybody should support, because it's in the best interest of the people of Ontario. Most importantly, it's in the best interest of kids—your kids and my kids. Their education is the most important thing we can do and we should do everything we can to make sure that it's the best one.

Ms. Churley: I want to respond to the member for Simcoe North, the member for Beaches—East York and the member for Thornhill, and to thank them all for their contributions, all of which were very interesting. Of particular interest were the comments from the member for Thornhill.

I guess I could say that what this bill is all about is the best interest of the government. It's not for the kids, not for the teachers, not for the schools, not for the parents; it's in the interest of the government, because they're trying to guarantee that there will be no strikes and no instability in the year 2007, when we're going to have an election.

Two of the Liberal members—it's too late now, the horse is out of the barn—have already admitted that, yes, in fact that's what this bill is attempting to do, to buy peace and stability or force peace and stability in the year 2007, during an election year.

But this is actually a really serious issue. The fact that we're not here debating the problems in the system, to avoid the very thing the government members are talking about, and that is, strikes in the future—we have work-to-rule happening in this city, in my riding, in the riding of Trinity—Spadina and in the riding of Beaches—East York,

and it's because of the non-action of this Liberal government that we're having this happen.

Talk about peace and stability—you have not invested. You are not listening. You get up and brag. You have these wonderful members from the education system who are advising you. They are either giving you bad advice or you're not listening to them. You are not keeping your promises, you're not funding our schools properly, and as a result we are having more strife and more—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga West.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. William Shakespeare penned a play—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. William Shakespeare penned a play about today's debate, and it's called *Much Ado About Nothing*. In fact, the member for Perth—Middlesex, with whom I'll be sharing my time this afternoon, would be glad to inform members whether or not this play can be seen in the 2005 Stratford Festival, which is truly one of the great theatrical experiences, not merely in Ontario but all the way across Canada.

Bill 167 is a brief bill. It's barely more than a single page. The Minister of Education's explanation of the bill on December 16, 2004, was a mercifully brief 89 words. The operative words in the minister's explanation were, and I quote him exactly, "It is technical in nature." The essence of Bill 167 is to require collective agreements between teachers and school boards that will be either two years or four years in duration.

In 1997 the Harris government in Ontario made a decision to restrict the scope of collective bargaining by imposing a one-size-fits-all contract duration of three years in its Bill 160. History will record that once the Tory Bill 160 was implemented, the number of days lost to labour disputes jumped dramatically. We hope to continue to work with our colleagues in education in an atmosphere that has changed dramatically since the election of this government.

What Bill 167 does is restore flexibility to collective bargaining between the federations that represent Ontario's teachers and the school boards that employ them. Bill 167 gives the parties the option of signing collective agreements that may be either two years or four years in duration, with an encouragement for four-year contracts. The duration of contracts cannot be changed with a stroke of a regulatory pen, and hence the need for Bill 167, which as previously stated is technical in nature.

Speaking to the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Education Minister Gerard Kennedy said, "The best way for a government to ensure peace and stability in Ontario schools is to stop meddling in collective bargaining, and allow local teachers and trustees to address local issues with as much versatility as possible." It's hard to summarize the benefits of Bill 167 in a more elegant way than that.

Donna Marie Kennedy, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, concurs. Her statement of February 22 on Bill 167 said the effect of Bill 167 would be, and I use her words, "to permit local negotiators to craft innovative answers to local learning and working conditions that are raised during negotiations, including terms of various lengths."

Now some of my colleagues across the aisle seem to feel that Bill 167 has something to do with the date of October 4, 2007, which is the date of the next election. I remind members opposite that any two-year contract signed in 2005 will come due in 2007.

This government respects teachers and the challenges they face every day in the classroom. So I'll accept the challenge put forth earlier this afternoon by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay and be bold. The government feels that if a board and its teachers sign a two-year agreement in 2005 that expires in 2007, which is an election year, then we'll respect that.

1720

Two- or four-year contracts allow for an environment conducive to fair collective bargaining. That always makes for a strong publicly funded education system. Neither side in a collective bargaining process would relish finishing one arduous collective agreement only to begin yet another within days or weeks or months. All parties need a framework for constructive, long-term planning and to focus on student achievement rather than negotiation. So Bill 167 is really about stability for students and parents alike, and the framework for a secure negotiation climate for both federations and boards.

The Minister of Education, as is his tendency, has listened his way to a sensible and pragmatic solution to contract terms. He consulted widely, perhaps exhaustively, with teachers, parents and administrators. As a result, Bill 167 is a tight, focused, workable solution to deliver the progress that students need and everyone in Ontario deserves.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth—Middlesex): I'm proud to follow my friend and colleague the member for Mississauga West. I appreciate the reference from Shakespeare, being of course the member representing the fine city of Stratford and the Stratford Festival. It was quite appropriate. I must say to all members that you will be getting something next week from me, courtesy of the Stratford Festival, extending an invitation to all members to come and visit our fine city and our wonderful institution. I know members look for that every year, and 2005 is going to be a great season. It opens at the end of April and runs to the first week of November.

But speaking of course, as I would want to, on Bill 167, I can't resist mentioning my good friend the member from Beaches—East York and his comment about how he thought that, yes, of course the unions would all think the current situation is better than the eight years of the previous government. But I think there is a slight amnesia there. I think if we go beyond eight years and we

look at those dark days of the social contract that were part of the legacy of the party to which you now have—

Interjection.

Mr. Wilkinson: Perhaps the member for Beaches—East York has amnesia, because I think there are a lot of people in education, people I know, who remember that. That's a legacy we have to deal with.

I would also want to commend the Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy. I had an opportunity to be with him in my own riding at an event where I believe there were something like 500 teachers, trustees and school board administrators, and he gave a masterful performance. To have a minister who understands his or her file—that is a challenge for any person who ends up being a minister of the crown in this province. But his performance that day, his understanding of the nuances of that file, his grasp, the fact that he was able to answer questions from the floor—I distinctly remember a teacher, I think it was, who got up and said they just could not believe that there was a Minister of Education willing to come and speak to them and answer their questions without a note, who knew exactly what his vision and the vision of our government is for the future of education in this province, and how critical that is, we think, to the future success of Ontario. I agree with the member from Mississauga East about how our goal is to create the next great generation of Ontarians.

There is much comment in regard to this bill, Bill 167: a very simple bill, but I think an important bill. I recall the words of Martin Luther. I say this with trepidation, as a Catholic, but Martin Luther got a number of things right, and this is one of the things that I thought he was right about, because this is all about peace and stability: "Peace is more important than all justice; and was not made for the sake of justice, but justice for the sake of peace."

We cannot have children in our classrooms learning if there is not peace and justice, if there is not peace and stability. It is up to us as the adults, as the people who are in charge of determining rates of taxation and distributing money across the province, deciding how money is spent—we hope, of course, wisely, but most importantly, invested in our young people, in education. That is our job. I think we have a responsibility to start off our mandate with the stated goal of having peace and stability in education, to turn the page from the situation that we inherited where there was not peace and stability, and I would say there was not justice either. That is what has led to our government being so focused on this.

So I want to commend the Minister of Education for this bill. I can assure you that if there were problems with this bill, the people in the education sector—the teachers, the trustees, the administrators, the parents—would be letting us know about it. But I have never received a single piece of correspondence from anybody in the education sector telling me that we're somehow wrong-headed about this. I think we're on the right course, and I look forward to this bill receiving the support of all

members of the House, for surely we are for peace, we are for justice and stability in our education system.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's a pleasure to comment on the remarks of the members for Mississauga West and Perth—Middlesex. I think both make the salient point that the purpose of this bill is to bring peace and stability to our school system. I have a little bit of experience. I was first elected to the North York Board of Education in the Metropolitan Toronto School Board back in the early 1990s, and I can tell you that for about the past dozen years it has been anything but that. I recall when the government of the day, the Rae government, introduced the odious social contract, which threw the entire education system into considerable turmoil.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I hear the former member for Kitchener—Waterloo, the former chair of the board in Waterloo—

Interjection: She's still the member.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: She's still the member, and thank God for that.

That was a time of incredible instability in the school system. I remember how the numbers of teachers were reduced by the hundreds. I remember how young teachers had their grids frozen and in fact were quite seriously disadvantaged. I remember how collective bargaining was suspended for a three-year period of time.

Then, of course, we had the next government come in. The former member from Mississauga West was the education minister, with the specific intent to create a crisis in education. In fact, that's exactly what happened.

So our government has come in, and we have in fact brought that peace and stability. We've increased education funding. We have overturned many of the odious policies of the previous government. We have not only brought a new-found respect to the teachers, but we've restored democracy in boards like the Toronto District School Board, previously under supervision. I commend the Minister of Education for these very progressive moves.

Mr. Hudak: Definitely this discussion has degenerated from a very interesting and compelling question period to a mutual love-in here among Liberal members. I'm getting caught in the crossfire with all this mutual back-patting.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, I'm not accustomed to the love.

Let me add another side of the story. I guess we'll see if all these predictions of peace and prosperity and higher quality and such come true. I'm going to be a bit skeptical, because I have not seen a plan to improve the quality in the classroom. In fact, I've seen the opposite. Certainly, while we hear the member's comments about everything being wine and roses in the education sector, I don't think that's actually meeting with the facts in terms of the number of boards now that are in strike positions, the number of work-to-rule campaigns that are probably soon to erupt in the province, including here in the largest

city in Canada, beginning Monday with the teachers as well as the support staff going into a work-to-rule campaign.

It will be interesting to see how the government will try to find an answer to their significant commitments to spending on one hand, and their inability to live up to their commitments on the other hand. The Bob Rae report—I know the Management Board chair was looking at it—is calling for an additional—what?—\$2.5 billion or \$3 billion in investment. Certainly the commitment under this bill in the plan works out to some \$3.5 billion plus. We are a little suspicious about all the smoke and mirrors on the books. It'll be interesting to see if they actually back up their promises. I think you'll see them backpedalling in the upcoming budget.

1730

Mr. Prue: It is always a pleasure in this House to stand up and comment, especially with such erudite members quoting Shakespeare first and then Martin Luther. I have to tell you, it has brought some real class to the debate. I would be amiss if I didn't quote one of my heroes, and that is Socrates, because I think Socrates said it best in one simple line, when listening to the stuff that we've had to listen to here today. Socrates said, "I would gladly be persuaded by you, sirs, but not against my better judgment."

So I've listened—

Mr. Wilkinson: Hemlock for you.

Mr. Prue: OK, hemlock for me. I've just been told I must have hemlock.

In any event, what has been said is that this is all in the interests of peace, this is all in the interests of the teachers and all in the interests of the education system. If that were the case, then I would think this bill would not say two or four years, because there's something missing in the middle; there's three years. What if it said, "Two, three or four years; you can help to determine what you want and perhaps we can work together for peace"? That isn't what's being said. What's being said is two or four, and distinctly not three.

With the greatest of respect to the members, it is quite clear why you don't want three. You have a very honest and courageous member in Mrs. Van Bommel. She has said, and I have to repeat it again, that it is to buy peace in an election year. That's what it is. You might as well say what it is. Don't try to persuade me and the others against our better judgment. Tell it honestly and truthfully for what it is: you don't want to have this hanging over your heads in 2007. If you do want to do something else, simply amend the bill. Say two, three or four, see where the teachers want to go with it, see where the schools and the school boards want to go, and then you'll know.

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I guess sometimes we forget that what we do here is not just for us. We're doing it for students, we're doing it for parents, we're doing it for grandparents. I can recall, over the years, a couple of circumstances when there were walkouts by teachers and the impact it had on people's

daily lives, as you've seen. It totally disrupts people. They have to take extraordinary steps to get their children to child care, to babysitting. It really upsets families and children. It's something the minister is essentially very sensitive to. So therefore he's trying to do his best.

Sure, you can look at imperfections in this bill, but it's an attempt, in essence, to bring some kind of positive relationship in the school system, which is massive, which has boards from Wawa to Windsor to Cornwall to Moose Factory. That's what this bill is trying to do. It's trying to do what I think most parents, teachers, students and grandparents want. They don't want their schools disrupted, if at all possible. That's what this has done in good faith, working with teachers, working with school boards, trying to make the system work better so that we won't get parents and the community angry with public education, angry with teachers. We're trying to find solutions, and this is what this bill is about.

I think the minister should be commended for working in this co-operative way to keep in mind the public out there, who don't want schools closed down.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member for Mississauga West.

Mr. Delaney: I'd like to acknowledge the comments of my colleagues the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the member for Erie-Lincoln, the member for Beaches-East York and the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

If I can depart for one moment, I'd like to thank the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal for realizing how important it is for all of the residents of Mississauga to get that third track on the Milton GO line, and also for his very helpful comments on Bill 167.

To the member for Erie-Lincoln, I note that he acknowledged that Bill 167 is a part in the mosaic of the plan to improve public education, and I join him in looking forward to having the government of Ontario continue to implement the Rae report.

To the member for Beaches-East York, always eloquent, I congratulate him on Hansard for his post as the new Deputy Chair.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: He's elegant.

Mr. Delaney: Elegant and eloquent.

It is, indeed, not often that the words of Socrates, Martin Luther and William Shakespeare are brought to bear in a single legislative debate. I sincerely hope—and I'm sure I express the hope of all members—that this is a trend that will continue in the future.

To my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence, he summed this up eloquently. He recognized that Bill 167 is not about politicians, it's about families, parents, students of all ages, as well as teachers and boards. My colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence knows that this restores a positive relationship to the interaction between boards and the federations, and that the bill tries to do what everyone wants it to do: deliver an environment of peace, stability and fairness.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm pleased to join second reading debate of Bill 167, the education bill that we're discussing this evening. It's a rather interesting debate, because when I look around the House here, there are many individuals who are now MPPs and cabinet ministers who, in their former life, were either teachers or trustees on school boards. So it's been interesting to listen to their comments as well.

I have some difficulty with the stated intent of this bill. The minister, when he introduced it, said he'd like to see peace and stability and provide for collective agreements of up to four years, or they could be two. I guess if we're really looking for peace and stability, he could have added that there should be two-, three-, and four-year agreements possible.

I would agree with those who have already spoken and said the only intention of this bill is to ensure that during election year 2007 this government doesn't find itself at war with the teachers, because despite the comments that were made by the minister for public infrastructure, if I recall my time as a teacher and a trustee, I can, I think, remember very well that there were strikes and walkouts during the time of the Liberal government, the NDP government and the Conservative government.

The truth is, regardless of the party in power, there has always been labour strife between governments and teachers at some time. So I think we have to be absolutely honest. By not having the opportunity for a three-year collective agreement, this government is trying to ensure that in 2007, when it plans to have the election on October 4, there will not be war with the teacher unions in the province of Ontario.

I heard one of the members in the Liberal caucus say that they wanted to work co-operatively with teachers. Well, you know, if that was the case, the Minister of Education would not have taken the actions that he did, because in doing so, we have the OSSTF president Rhonda Kimberley-Young saying, "Yes, we want to have a positive relationship, but what this minister has done is gone around the union leadership," and she says this does not lend itself to peace and stability.

Now, what did the minister do? This is what OSSTF was so upset about. Again, it doesn't speak to wanting to work in co-operation with unions. What the Minister of Education did was unveil funding for teachers' pay increases over the next four years, and he offered them incentives to sign four-year deals. Well, you know, folks, that's not working in co-operation with teachers and teacher unions in the province of Ontario. Furthermore, the minister should recognize that it's not up to the provincial government to negotiate with teachers in this province. If they want to take away the role of the school boards in the province, then they're going to have to change legislation to do so.

1740

Of course, when he made that offer and unveiled the funding, he actually pledged to give them 2% this year and next year, and then he would give them 2.5% and 3%. I think we gave teachers 3% in the last collective

agreement we had, so this is actually less than we had provided. However, that deal the minister proposed, which was totally inappropriate for a Minister of Education to make, that type of announcement, that type of offer when collective bargaining should be taking place at the local level, certainly has got him into some sort of trouble, because again I quote OSSTF President Rhonda Kimberley Young, "We don't expect any Minister of Education"—she's referring, in this case, to Liberal Minister of Education Kennedy—"to stand up and dictate the percentage increases teachers will get over the next four years. That is micromanaging the system."

Despite what the Liberal government says about wanting to have peace and stability and harmonious relationships with the education community in Ontario, their actions certainly suggest otherwise. It does appear that they're trying to micromanage the system. They're trying to ensure that in 2007 there will be no war between this government and teachers in the province. They're trying to ensure that they do everything possible to make sure that doesn't happen.

I think the government has been less than honest in their introduction of this bill. The Minister of Education has acted very inappropriately to have unveiled funding for teacher increases before he even introduced this legislation. In fact, our critic for education, MPP Frank Klees from Oak Ridges, actually asked Speaker Alvin Curling to find Minister Kennedy in contempt for first notifying teachers of his intentions before the Legislature found out. Mr. Klees said at that time, "Every member in this place should reserve the right, first, to see the legislation, second, to have an opportunity to debate it,"—which is what we're doing right now—"and third, certainly to have an opportunity to vote on it before the minister of the crown issues his directives to bargaining units across this province, to boards of education and to directors of education."

I would agree. This is totally inappropriate. As a chair of a school board and a trustee for 10 years, I would tell you that school boards and teachers do not respond well to this type of directive. It was totally inappropriate. Again, it shows that this government is trying to micromanage the system and also centralize control. As I say, if that's what the government wants to do, then they need to pass legislation and set up provincial bargaining, and not leave the problem up to the local school boards, which, as you know, are finding it pretty hard to make ends meet at the present time.

I guess I also have a lot of problems with the fact that we are debating and even discussing this legislation, which is simply intended to help the Liberals win the 2007 election, and it does nothing more than that. There are so many critical issues in the education sector that should be addressed and we haven't seen this minister bring forward significant pieces of legislation that would actually focus on improving the quality of education for the children in our schools.

We've heard this minister talk about elimination of junk food, and I don't disagree, that that's not important. However, we really should be passing legislation in this House that provides the appropriate level of support for special education. That whole issue of special education, which has been totally mismanaged by this minister, has not yet been resolved. I can tell you that my boards in Waterloo, and particularly the separate school board, are extremely unhappy with the mismanagement of those funds: first giving the funds, then taking the funds back.

This minister doesn't recognize the impact he's having on children. We now see that the Toronto board probably isn't going to have enough money for children in special education and other classes to have some of the teacher assistants that are needed. Those are the issues we should be debating and discussing here, not whether teachers are going to have a two- and four-year agreement to help this government win in 2007.

What about issues like numeracy and literacy? If we don't ensure that all of our students have basic literacy and numeracy skills, we will not be able to ensure that these students are able to move forward into work, into apprenticeships or into post-secondary education. That's where our focus needs to be. We need to be focusing on identifying the problems within the system for our students and putting in place programs that are going to enhance and support and help our young people achieve their full potential. That's what we need to be talking about.

We also need to be making sure that we implement the new transportation model. I have just heard from Tracy Morency in my riding, who had been assured by the minister that they were going to move forward in 2005 with this new transportation model. She now writes to me and says that may not be happening. She said, "Would you please, Mrs. Witmer, get the status? We were committed that this would happen; it appears now it may not happen." These are the issues that the parents and students in this province care about: improving the quality of education, making sure that our students can arrive at school safely and return to their homes safely. It now appears that the whole issue of transportation, which people thought was going to be resolved, might be postponed.

And of course we've got the issue of students who need a little additional help, students who have always dropped out of school. We need to be supporting those young people. We need to make sure that we fully implement the recommendations that Dr. Rozanski brought to our government's attention when I was the Minister of Education, which we had started to implement. We had started to make the funding available. Those are the initiatives that this government needs to be focusing on. These are the programs and the services that are going to help the young people in our midst, and here we are talking about two- and four-year agreements.

The other thing we need to make sure of is that our schools are safe places. We need to continue to take a look at the Safe Schools Act. We need to make sure that

any student or any teacher feels safe in that environment. It's very important that the learning environment be as safe as it can possibly be.

We also need to focus on making sure that our students have appropriate accommodation. So we need to continue to ensure that there is safe space for our students as well.

We need to make sure that we take a look at early education and recognize that our students need to be provided with a quality education. We need to be introducing programs that will give them a head start, because we know that if we introduce programs early in life for children, these children are going to have a better chance of achieving academic success. These students are less likely to have physical problems and are less likely to get into difficulty with the law.

I would encourage this minister and this government to introduce some legislation to make some changes that are actually going to make a difference in the lives of the students in this province. I would just stress that I'm disappointed that we are here debating a bill which the minister purports is to create stability and peace, but which simply is a mechanism to ensure that we don't have strikes in the election year.

1750

I would also say that despite the plan that the minister has brought forward, we are right now seeing labour unrest in the province of Ontario. I've said before that this is not unusual. We've seen it when the Liberals were in office, we've seen it when our government was in office, we've seen it when the NDP were in office and it will happen again, unfortunately, in the future.

The unrest that we see today, which is going to start with the work to rule, is going to have an impact on quality of education for our students, because unfortunately, depending on the work-to-rule situation, some teachers may not be able to complete their report cards. Some teachers may not be able to accompany their students on field trips. We're already hearing about schools that have made plans to cancel trips.

Let's take a look at what Toronto Parent Network spokesperson Cathy Dandy said: "You know, this work to rule is definitely going to have an impact on the kids. It is really sad, and I think parents are going to be very frustrated. The board and the union and the province all have to take some responsibility around this and change it." I would agree.

I would just say to you that the situation that we have here today certainly indicates that despite what the Minister of Education is saying, there is simmering teacher unrest. We're certainly not seeing that all is well in the educational system. I know that in my own community, again, the teachers are looking at work to rule. I think that this government should instead be focusing on making sure they don't make announcements like this minister did prior to the introduction of any legislation.

Mr. Hudak: That was a mistake.

Mrs. Witmer: That was a big, big, big mistake. Unions don't appreciate it and that's why they are

responding as they have. I hope that their job actions are not stepped up further because, regrettably, it will have a very negative impact on the students.

I would just suggest that this government acknowledge this legislation for what it is. Some of the members in the Liberal caucus have acknowledged that it's an attempt to make sure there is not labour strife, labour unrest, strikes, work to rule during the year 2007, when we're going to have the next provincial election.

I really think we should be focusing on special education. Mr. Kennedy promised changes to education funding for special education, he's promised to revamp the system and he's promised that the children are going to receive the funds they need. But I can tell you, after almost a year and a half in office, the situation has deteriorated. It's creating a lot of tension for parents of children with special needs.

For those of you who are not educators, this is the time of year when the children's needs are assessed and school boards start to make decisions about what additional resources these young people are going to need in order to allow them to reach their full potential. In some cases, they're going to need additional teacher assistance in order to help them. I think they're very afraid, as they see this labour unrest and they see the passage of this legislation, that the issues that matter to those students with special needs are going to be neglected.

I think it's important that this government refocuses its priorities and makes sure that in future, when they bring forward legislation, it at least is going to be legislation which recognizes the needs of students, talks about students and makes sure that it allows the students to reach their full potential.

I'm going to conclude my remarks at this point in time. Unfortunately, you know what? Our focus needs to be on students; our focus should not be on making sure that we win the next election. I hope this government focuses on implementing all of the recommendations of the Rozanski report, because there were some outstanding recommendations.

Dr. Rozanski is an educator who did a thorough evaluation and met with very knowledgeable, respected people in the province: teachers, educators and parents. He put in place some recommendations that are going to help our students in the educational environment. I think this government could take a page from Dr. Rozanski's recommendations. Again, they need to focus on the students.

The Acting Speaker: It being approximately 6 p.m. of the clock, at this stage in the debate it's an appropriate time to adjourn till Monday at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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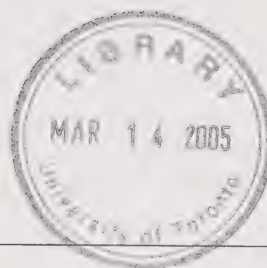
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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 7 March 2005

Lundi 7 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mars 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SHANNON AND ERICA DEERING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House to pay tribute to a successful event in my community on Saturday, March 5, at the Scugog arena on behalf of Erica and Shannon Deering. Over 1,000 friends and neighbours attended. Everyone present shared the view that it takes a community to raise a child, and Scugog and Port Perry, their home, is just such a community.

When two of our community's children needed help, the response was overwhelming, generous and full of warmth. Shannon Deering is 19 years old and her sister Erica is 16. They were left as quadriplegics after a horrific car accident last summer. However, the event this past weekend shows that they are not alone in meeting the challenges that they face. In fact, I can see Shannon and Erica being a strong voice for the physically disabled community any time soon. I am pleased to report that Shannon and Erica will soon be home in Port Perry in their new barrier-free home.

The benefit hockey game on Saturday is one of many examples of the entire community coming together to support the Deering sisters and their parents Tony and stepmother Debra and grandparent Jean Deering, who is a real treasure and who looks after the children on a daily basis. She is to be formally thanked.

Saturday's special guests included 2002 Olympic hockey gold medalist Cheryl Pounder and her teammates from the Toronto Aeros. Some of the team included Sommer West, Heather Logan, Bradi Cochrane and Jen McCullough. They played a Scugog team comprised of mostly women from the Scugog area.

I would like to commend Brian Callery, Bill Van Camp, Rob Scott, Martha Larsen, Ron Compton, Brenda Robinson and Marg Snider-McGrath for their support of the Deering sisters.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'd like to bring to the attention of the House two important items related to identity theft that consumers must watch out for.

The first, as incredible as it sounds, concerns a constituent of mine who had his identity stolen in order for thieves to steal his house. In fact, his house was sold twice within 19 months before he noticed another person's name on his property tax bill.

The second also concerns identity theft, which is the fastest-growing crime in our country. Tens of thousands of our citizens are victimized by identity thieves every year. While I applaud our minister's valiant effort to combat identity theft through public education campaigns and making specific recommendations to businesses, this may not be enough. Many of our new immigrants and members of our ethnocultural communities may not be able to defend themselves properly, since this kind of theft is really foreign to them. We must listen to consumer advocates who are calling for more stringent measures such as requiring businesses and government to report leaks of personal information to consumers and criminalizing identity theft offences. We should listen to them and act quickly before identity theft becomes a real epidemic.

WOMEN'S CURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I rise today to tell all members of this House about the outstanding performance of Kanata residents Jenn and Stephanie Hanna at this year's Scott Tournament of Hearts Canadian women's curling championships, held in St. John's, Newfoundland. Jenn is the skip of the Ontario rink that made it to the championship final, where they were defeated when Manitoba's skip snatched victory with her last rock.

Jenn's Ottawa curling team arrived at St. John's as relative unknowns. However, that changed quickly when they began the competition by defeating Canadian curling legend Colleen Jones and her Team Canada rink. Jones, who has six Canadian championships and two world championships to her credit, is one of 25-year-old Jenn's heroes.

After that initial victory, the Ottawa rink faltered under new-found media attention and added pressure, but Jenn and her teammates regrouped to win four of their last five round-robin matches and then two tiebreakers and a semifinal match.

I'm sure all members of this House will want to join me in congratulating Jenn and Stephanie, as well as their teammates Dawn Askin, Pascale Letendre and Joelle Sabourin, all from Kanata and the city of Ottawa. We're proud of them all.

NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK WEEK

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Today marks the beginning of National Social Work Week. The theme this year is Social Workers: Celebrating Community—Honouring Diversity. This gives everyone a chance to honour and recognize the work they do to enhance the quality of life for individuals, families and communities across Ontario and Canada. It is also an opportunity to publicly recognize the contribution of individuals who remain true to the Ontario Association of Social Workers' goals of creating a caring and just society.

In 2001, Dr. Dan Andreae and Dr. Frank Turner established a division of the profession called the Social Work Doctors' Colloquium. They are a group of senior leaders in the profession from academia and practice, and today they are pleased to be presenting the honourable David Zimmer, MPP from Willowdale and parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, with the inaugural Award of Merit. The Social Work Doctors' Colloquium Award of Merit will be awarded annually to an elected official who represents the values of the social work profession.

Throughout his career, Mr. Zimmer has been actively involved in humanitarian causes, including as vice-president of the Alzheimer Society of Canada, as deputy chair of the Refugee and Immigration Board of Canada and as chair of the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Corp., one of the largest in North America. His ongoing interest in improving the lives of Ontarians and in enhancing the quality of communities makes him a most worthy recipient of this special honour. I would like to personally congratulate my colleague the honourable David Zimmer on his award, as well as to thank the social workers of Ontario for the valuable work they do.

1340

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): People who care about health care were excited to learn that the Minister of Health was coming to their riding, that he was visiting the great riding of Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey. They were excited; they wondered if he was going to be coming to help explain what he was going to do for rural patients who are in desperate need of a physician—these orphan patients. They thought he would be there to announce new funding for the Headwaters hospital in Orangeville, which is trying to get more funding to increase the hours that they can operate their MRI. They thought they might be getting new funds to deal with additional cataract operations, because these are the so-called priority areas of the government's agenda.

Alas, when the Minister of Health showed up in Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, all the people of that constituency got was politics—no promises, no deliverables, nothing. This followed through on last Friday's successful agreement with the Ontario Medical Asso-

ciation, where there was no new money put on the table to attract more physicians to the province of Ontario, or new residents' spots for Ontario students.

People in Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey were excited about the opportunity that more funding would be coming for rural Ontario, but alas, they realized that this government has not responded to those needs, to those challenges. People in this riding have a great opportunity to send in an advocate for them and to send Dalton McGuinty a message by voting for John Tory on March 17.

PROTECTION FOR
HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Every year in Ontario, more than 22,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'd like to hear the member from Nickel Belt's statement.

You can start again.

Ms. Martel: Every year in Ontario, more than 22,000 health care workers are accidentally stuck with needles. The vast majority of these accidents could be prevented through the use of safety-engineered devices such as retractable needles. The sharps alliance—including ONA, SEIU and OPSEU—has lobbied the Minister of Health to make the use of safety-engineered devices mandatory in Ontario. To date, no commitment has been made by the McGuinty Liberal government to protect workers in this important way.

This is a very serious health and safety issue. Today, I will present a private member's bill aimed at preventing accidental injuries and infections caused by accidental sticks with hypodermic needles and other sharps.

In Saskatchewan, the government is conducting public consultations on a regulation on mandatory safety-engineered medical devices to go into effect this November. In Manitoba, the government has announced it will bring in legislation or a regulation to make safety-engineered devices mandatory. Four years ago, the federal Needle-stick Safety and Prevention Act came into effect in the United States. Last year, researchers at the University of Virginia's International Health Care Worker Safety Center showed that with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance so far, there was a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries.

It's time to protect Ontario workers from needle-stick injuries and reduce the health care costs associated with testing and treating workers who are injured on the job. My private member's bill will be debated on March 31, and I ask all members to support this important bill.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): Last week, the McGuinty government announced that it will be investing in the diagnostic and medical equipment re-

quired to care for Ontarians in their homes and in their communities. This is all part of this government's commitment to providing home care to 95,700 more Ontarians by 2007-08. The diagnostic and medical equipment we're investing in will strengthen our home care system, allowing us to do exactly that. This investment in medical equipment will assist people in their own homes, in supportive housing and in adult day programs in the community. The equipment includes mechanical lifts, bathing equipment, intravenous and feeding pumps, as well as devices designed to increase mobility, such as door openers and wheelchairs.

Province-wide, this announcement is getting a warm welcome. Joe McReynolds, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Community Support Association, said: "This extremely wise investment by the government will help people with disabling conditions to access services in their community. Both client and worker safety will also be increased, with far fewer opportunities for injuries."

Health care reform won't be easy, but we can no longer continue with the status quo. Step by step, we will make sure that Ontarians are the healthiest people in the country, and Friday's announcement is one of those steps. We are transforming health care in Ontario and bringing positive change to Ontarians.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Last week, we welcomed farmers from across the province who came to send us a message. They were here to tell us that times are bad and they need our help.

I'm proud to say that many members of the Liberal caucus, including myself, were out there that day to listen to farmers and hear what they had to say. I'm even prouder of being a rural Ontarian. The people you saw in the crowd were people I am proud to represent. They are the people who ensure that Ontarians, along with all Canadians, have quality food on their tables each and every day.

It's no secret that they are faced with extraordinary challenges like BSE and low commodity prices. I want the farmers in Northumberland to know that we heard you at the rally and we are committed to you. We see the pain and frustration in your eyes, and we are working to make farming more sustainable in the province. That is why we have already taken some necessary steps such as exempting the land transfer tax from family farms, investing in increased abattoir capacity for older animals, establishing a new renewable fuel standard that will require that gasoline sold in Ontario contain an average of 5% ethanol by 2007 to help our corn farmers and providing up to \$30 million to help the cattle industry recover from the fallout of BSE. But we know that farmers need more help, and we'll continue to meet with them and work with them to ensure they have the tools they need to continue in the footsteps of the many proud farmers who have come before them.

CHILD OBESITY

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to speak about the leadership role that the McGuinty government is playing across North America. Indeed, the right's newest hero, the Republican Governor of California, is following the government's lead when it comes to fighting child obesity.

Yesterday, the Governor himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger, came out in favour of terminating junk food from schools as a great step in the right direction against child obesity. On this side of the House, we already know that giving kids healthy choices in schools will help them make better choices about what they eat now and in the future.

Unfortunately, the official opposition doesn't seem to think that child obesity is a problem. Instead of supporting a good piece of legislation and pumping up the kids with healthy food choices, the member for Oak Ridges accuses us of micromanaging. Shame on him.

While I would never say such a thing, it occurs to me that if the Terminator saw their lack of concern for child obesity, he just might call the PC member for Oak Ridges and the new guy who wants to come in girlie men. That's what he'd call them.

Hopefully, having their newest hero come onside with our way of thinking would convince the Tories that this is indeed good legislation. If not, parents all across the province will be saying *hasta la vista* to them in the next election.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to say two things. We would be willing to ask for unanimous consent for him to speak for another minute or two; and second, I say to Bill Carroll, don't give him the Play of the Week for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I know there is unanimous consent that he do another statement tomorrow.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present the report on pre-budget consultations, 2005, from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Mr Hoy presents the committee report and moves adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a statement?

Mr. Hoy: The standing committee on finance and economic affairs conducted extensive pre-budget consultations in December 2004 and January 2005 in Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Ottawa, Kingston, London and Whitby. Witnesses included the Minister of Finance; experts invited by the committee to present economic and financial forecasts; representatives from various associations, organizations and other stakeholder

groups; and individuals. The committee heard from 158 witnesses appearing in person and received 82 written submissions from others who did not appear before the committee.

I want to thank committee members from all three parties and the staff who assisted with the committee work.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Hoy has moved adjournment of the debate on the motion for adoption of the recommendations of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Yakubski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 19.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Mr. Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 176, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, to repeal the Representation Act, 1996 and to enact the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 176, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, abrogeant la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale et édictant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr. Bryant?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'll speak to it in ministers' statements.

1400

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT (ONGOING DISCLOSURE OF CONTRIBUTIONS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS (DIVULGATION CONTINUE DES CONTRIBUTIONS)

Ms. Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act respecting the ongoing disclosure of contributions by registered political parties and constituency associations / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections en ce qui a trait à la divulgation continue des contributions par les partis politiques inscrits et les associations de circonscription inscrites.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Churley?

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This is, unlike the government bill just introduced, a real-time bill in real time, right now, that will deal with real-time disclosure of financial contributions. It amends the Election Finances Act to provide that the chief financial officer of every political party and constituency association—which is not part of the Liberal bill introduced today—must, within seven days of depositing a contribution in excess of \$500, file with the Chief Election Officer the name of the contributor and the amount of the contribution.

I would move unanimous consent for second and third readings of this bill today without debate.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard a no.

GREENBELT AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT GREENBELT), 2005
LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE
(CEINTURE DE VERDURE PERMANENTE)

Ms. Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Act, 2005 to create a permanent greenbelt / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la ceinture de verdure afin de créer une ceinture de verdure permanente.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Churley?

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): What this bill does is actually create a permanent greenbelt instead of the floating greenbelt that was just passed in this House. The bill amends the Greenbelt Act, 2005, to designate additional areas of land to be included in the greenbelt area: the lands that I made amendments to and that the government left out.

The bill also amends the act to prohibit regulations removing lands from the greenbelt area and to prohibit amendments to the greenbelt plan removing lands from areas to which the plan applies, which under the government's bill you can do.

The bill prohibits the issuance of licences or permits, or expansion of site plans under the Aggregate Resources Act, if they relate to a site including or adjacent to a key natural heritage feature located in the protected countryside.

The bill also amends the act to provide that objectives of the greenbelt plan include that no development proceed on lands that are part of the natural heritage system designated in the greenbelt plan.

The bill expands the prohibition on passing bylaws or undertaking projects that conflict with the greenbelt plan to also apply to Ontario ministries, boards, commissions and agencies. In the case of a conflict between a provision in the greenbelt plan and a provision in a plan, bylaw, policy, act or regulation specified in the bill, the provision providing more protection to the natural environment or human health prevails.

The bill amends the act to replace the hearing officer appointed by the minister to hear proposed amendments to the greenbelt plan with a greenbelt area tribunal, which is established in the bill.

The bill also amends the act to replace the Greenbelt Council with the greenbelt advisory council and sets out provisions regarding the council's membership, terms of reference and mandate.

Finally, the bill amends the act to address the applicability of section 3 of the Planning Act and section 7 of the act to a plan made or amended by the minister under the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994, as well as the applicability of section 7 of the act to decisions made relating to areas designated as protected countryside. Should we pass this bill, it means we will have a permanent greenbelt, not a floating greenbelt.

SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR
L'UTILISATION D'AIGUILLES SÛRES
POUR SAUVER DES VIES

Ms. Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries / Loi visant à réduire les incidences de blessures causées par des piqûres d'aiguille.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Martel?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Every year more than 22,000 health care workers are accidentally stuck with needles on the job in Ontario, and a vast majority of these accidents can and should be prevented with the use of safety-engineered medical sharps.

In Saskatchewan, the government is working on a regulation now to go into effect on this issue this November. In Manitoba, the government has announced it will introduce a regulation or legislation that will also make safety-engineered medical sharps mandatory there. Four years ago, federal legislation in the US was passed to make safety-engineered devices mandatory, and last year research showed that, with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance, there has been a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries.

It's time that Ontario workers were protected too. My bill will require that employers in prescribed workplaces must provide for and ensure the use of safety-engineered medical sharps, if commercially available and appropriate, in any circumstance where a worker is required to use a medical sharp.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL Pr11

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion regarding committees.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): Was that for the Pr bill?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Yes, for the private bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent, as requested by the minister? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that standing order 87 respecting notice of committee hearings be suspended for consideration of Bill Pr11, An Act respecting the Kitchener-Waterloo Young Men's Christian Association, by the standing committee on regulations and private bills on Wednesday, March 9, 2005.

The Speaker: Carried? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, March 7, 2005, and Tuesday, March 8, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The minister has moved government notice of motion number 316. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1410 to 1415.

The Speaker: Will all members take their seats, please. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Baird, John R.	Hoy, Pat	Racco, Mario G.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Caplan, David	Mathews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Millroy, John	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	
Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie	Martel, Shelley	
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSESDEMOCRATIC RENEWAL
RENOUVEAU DÉMOCRATIQUE

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for

democratic renewal): I am pleased to introduce the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill, if passed, will strengthen Ontario's democracy in four ways.

First, it will give Ontarians a more direct say on important government decisions than they've ever had before by allowing us to move forward on establishing a citizens' assembly on electoral reform and a citizens' jury on political finance reform. This bill will enable Elections Ontario to access the permanent register of electors so people can be selected to take part. Under the current law, Elections Ontario cannot do this. Under this bill, if passed, that would happen.

Second, this bill, if passed, will give northern Ontarians stronger representation in the Legislature by preserving the existing 11 northern ridings in Ontario.

Third, this bill, if passed, also reintroduces fixed election dates, putting citizens at the centre of our democracy. Each election would be four years from the last election. For example, the next election will be on Thursday, October 4, 2007.

Finally, with this bill we are making political donations to parties more transparent to the people of Ontario. This bill provides for real-time disclosure of donations to political parties and leadership candidates and requires that those contributions be made public through the Internet. The system we are introducing will make Ontario the world leader in transparency when it comes to donations to political parties and leadership candidates. If passed, the legislation would apply to both election and non-election periods, as well as to leadership campaigns. To my knowledge, there is no other jurisdiction with such a comprehensive level of transparency for real-time donations. Donations must be reported to the Chief Election Officer at Elections Ontario, not a year after they have taken place, not six months after they have been donated, but within five business days. That is real-time disclosure. The Chief Election Officer, in turn, will post the reports on the Internet within five business days of receiving them.

1420

Ce système fera de nous un chef de file mondial de la transparence. Ce projet de loi reflète ce qui est au cœur de notre programme de renouveau démocratique : l'établissement d'une relation plus positive et productive entre les citoyens et leurs représentants élus.

Finally, this reporting provision will be retroactive to January 1, 2004. That means you will not have to wait to see a recent donation, and all future donations will be made public on a regular basis.

I wish to recognize the fantastic work by my great parliamentary assistant Dr. Kuldip Kular, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. This bill also reflects the excellent work by the professional and diligent civil servants of the Democratic Renewal Secretariat.

Moving ahead on electoral reform, preserving our 11 northern ridings, real-time disclosure of donations: This government promised democratic renewal; this bill means democratic renewal. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

HYDRO GENERATION

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources):

It's a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to inform the members of the government's ongoing efforts to promote renewable energy opportunities.

As a government, we recognize that Ontario's continued growth and prosperity depend on an adequate, long-term supply of electricity. Our approach to meeting that need is two-pronged: We are looking to increase generating capacity—particularly clean, renewable energy sources—while also promoting a culture of conservation.

We have set ambitious goals for cleaner energy generation. The members will know that our government has set a goal that Ontario will get at least 5% more of its electricity from new clean, renewable sources by 2007. This requirement increases to 10% by 2010. My ministry is working to ensure that we can meet those goals.

I'm pleased to advise the members that earlier today I announced that we were making 18 sites available for water power development. I also announced that we were inviting a second round of applications to develop wind power on crown land.

The members may recall that last November we issued calls for expressions of interest to identify potential water power sites. The ministry was generally pleased with the results. A total of 57 applications were received, and 18 sites have been approved for development. The successful proponents now have 121 days to send in development proposals. We believe there is potential for between 200 and 300 megawatts of clean hydroelectric capacity.

At the same time, we are giving a six-month window of opportunity, starting on April 1, for companies or individuals to submit proposals for sites for wind power development on crown land. This follows closely on our approval given in January for 16 private companies to assess wind power potential on 21 crown land sites. We feel that there could be as much as 3,000 megawatts of wind power capacity on private and crown land in Ontario.

As we develop cleaner and greener energy projects, we are tapping into a very fertile source of innovation, job creation and competitive growth. I would venture to say that this is an exciting time for the renewable energy industry in Ontario.

We believe that continued investment in water power and other sources of renewable energy will both clean up our air and create new jobs and opportunities right across this province. We are doing all of that so that we can help ensure that Ontarians have cleaner air to breathe, a healthier environment and a more prosperous future.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It's amazing what a \$10,000-a-ticket fundraiser will bring to this Legislature.

Last week my leader, John Tory, received a letter from Mr. Bryant. Mr. Bryant said in his letter, "Deb Matthews, MPP, president of the Ontario Liberal Party, will represent our party as we move forward together to work out the necessary framework for disclosure. I invite you"—John Tory; Howard Hampton is also on this letter—"or your designate to be in touch with Ms. Matthews to arrange a meeting to finalize the details so we can all commence this disclosure as quickly as possible." I don't know how this is moving forward together. This letter was written on March 3. This is March 7.

The Liberals talk about moving together and bringing forward fair democratic reform, but this bill that was introduced today has no role for MPPs to be involved in what goes forward with regard to democratic renewal in this province. Much of the bill is left up to regulations—regulations that are going to be made by a Liberal cabinet as to how we go forward. The terms of reference for the democratic renewal citizens' committee will be set by the Liberal candidate. They will not be set by the Legislative Assembly.

I'd also like to comment with regard to the provision that we're going to have 11 ridings in the north. If we have 11 ridings in the north, that's fine and dandy by us, but we have to be fair to the south as well. Our Constitution says that every citizen has the same equal vote. When you look at the numbers that come out, with regard to 107 ridings, we have ridings that are going to be 34% below the provincial average, which is 106,600 people. There are three ridings in the north that are smaller than ridings in the south. Yet those ridings in the south are not going to have average representations of a population of 76,000 or 77,000; they're going to have populations of over 110,000.

Not only is this act in contravention of the federal Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, which is our legislation where we set our boundaries, but it's also in contravention of section 3 of the Charter of Rights. This bill allows that of the 11 constituencies in the north, 10 are above the 25% limit contained in the readjustment act. If the government wants 11 ridings in the north, then let's go ahead, but we will have to have more ridings in the south.

Therefore, I would say to the minister that as we go through this process, the only fair thing to do, if you want to retain 11 in the north, is to set up a provincial election boundaries commission to establish how many ridings we should have in the south, and that those people should have equal representation to those in the north. Some of the people I represent in my riding will be part of a population of 113,000, over 9,600 square kilometres, whereas the riding of Sault Ste. Marie in the north will have a population of 74,000 and will cover 250 square kilometres. This doesn't add up. The Charter of Rights is for all Ontarians, whether they're in the north, in the east or in the south.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'd like to respond on behalf—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I got a lot of interruptions in the responses, and I commend the member from Lanark–Carleton for not even having an outburst about that. But I need to have more co-operation from the members so I can hear the responses.

Ms. Churley: I'd like to respond to the minister responsible for democratic renewal. Let me see what we have here today: We have retroactive real-time disclosure. So if you gave a year ago or so, retroactively it's going to show up on the books. What this bill gives us is a real-time loophole, because you exclude riding associations, and we all know what happens with that. Just in case you don't get it, let me explain. This means that you can keep on having your high-priced dinners with the Premier and finance minister and have individual cheques for over \$5,000 each made out to different riding associations. What a scam.

1430

You have an opportunity to come forward today with real-time disclosure. Was it a mistake? Do you want to make an amendment and put it in? This bill before us today is a further delaying tactic. Instead of getting on with passing a bill like mine today, which does not have a big loophole you could drive a truck through—why don't we pass that instead, or make an amendment to yours?

You're doing exactly what the Tories used to do. We want real-time disclosure. You promised real-time disclosure. You bring forward a bill today on real-time disclosure, an omnibus bill with other parts in the democratic renewal process that you know the opposition is going to have different problems with. Yet you include it all in one. Why don't you sever your real-time disclosure bill off—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Municipal Affairs, please. Minister for Natural Resources, come to order, please.

Ms. Churley: Mr. Speaker, it's getting under his skin, no doubt.

Sever the real-time disclosure bill off and amend it to get rid of the loophole, so riding associations are included, or pass my bill—one or the other. You did that, by the way; you had no problem severing out fixed dates for elections, so why not sever off real-time? I will tell you why you're not severing it off: You are stalling. You continue to stall.

This bill that's before us today is an omnibus bill. There are many difficulties with this bill, and I encourage and demand that the government sever off real-time disclosure so we can deal with it in real time, right now, and quit this stalling.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Natural Resources who, like the Minister of Energy last week, has come and made another nothing announcement. Is anything happening? No. Just like last week, when the Minister of

Energy came into the Legislature and announced he was going to write a letter to the federal Minister of Finance. Well, write your letter. This is not going to bring on any more wind power now. This is not going to bring on any more hydroelectricity power now.

This is a government that is desperate for hydroelectricity announcements to cover up the fact that two years into your mandate, you do nothing while coal burns. Remember that promise? You were going to shut down all the coal plants. Here we are, two years into the announcement, and this government does nothing while coal burns.

There's something even more interesting about this announcement, because when the minister went to Thunder Bay to make his original announcement about water power in northern Ontario, the First Nations ran him out of town. They sent him packing, back to Toronto, because his announcement was so unfavourable to them. They looked at it and they saw that the McGuinty government's policy for developing more hydroelectricity in northern Ontario would force First Nations into the hands of companies like Brascan. What did Brascan do just a few years ago? After they got their hands on the Mississagi River plants, they literally ran the lake dry. The environment be damned, fish habitats be damned, tourist industry be damned. Run the lake dry because you can make money. The McGuinty government is now telling First Nations, "Climb in bed with Brascan. Your future lies with an environmentally irresponsible corporation like Brascan."

There's something else that's interesting here. None of these announcements will do anything for the 130 workers at the pulp mill in Terrace Bay who are losing their jobs thanks to the McGuinty government. None of these announcements will do anything about the more than 200 workers at the Kenora paper mill who right now are dealing with the possibility their mill may close, or the Abitibi workers in Thunder Bay who are dealing with the possibility their mill may close. Why? Because the McGuinty government policy is to drive up electricity rates, no matter how many mills close and no matter how many thousands of workers lose their jobs in northern Ontario.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I have a real-time point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent for the order for second and third readings of Bill 176, an Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act, that it be called immediately and that the question be immediately put without any further debate or amendment, so we can get this done in real time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. It seems to me you've all heard it, because I was having difficulty. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There's a lot of disruption in the early part here.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm glad the member for St. Catharines agrees with me.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A week and a half ago, you appeared on TVO's Fourth Reading and you talked about the greenbelt and how you arrived at your boundaries.

Those of us who were hoping for a clearer explanation were disappointed. The so-called scientific reasons for the boundaries remain sealed in a Mason jar underneath the Premier's Rosedale porch. Here's what you said to Susanna Kelley: "I have not met with any developers. I have purposely stayed away from meeting with individual landowners that had an interest in the greenbelt."

Minister, do you still stand by your statement from a week and a half ago?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, we're very proud of the greenbelt that was created and that basically added a million acres of land to that.

I can confirm that during the process of drawing up the greenbelt, between about August of last year until the plans came out, I have not met with any developer on the greenbelt. The gentleman who was referred to, I met with on the night of the seventh game of the Stanley Cup playoffs between Toronto and Philadelphia when he wanted to know from me whether or not this government was willing to break its commitment with respect to the agricultural preserve in Pickering. I told him no; it was a commitment of this government that that would be preserved for farmland. That was the total conversation that I had with that gentleman. But never at any time did I meet with developers or property owners with respect to the greenbelt while the process of drawing up the greenbelt took place, between the summer and the time it was enacted here.

Mr. Runciman: Now we're starting to qualify time-lines. We have a copy of a letter sent to the minister today by a developer with an interest in the greenbelt. The minister said just a week and a half ago, and I'll quote him again, "I have purposely stayed away from meeting with individual landowners that had an interest in the greenbelt." You didn't state, "Within a four-week or a five-week period, I stayed away from greenbelt developers who had an interest in developing the greenbelt area."

In the letter, the developer thanks the minister for meeting with him. Worse, he also thanks the minister for exempting a parcel of land that he owns from the greenbelt. I'll send a copy of this letter over to the minister.

Minister, I believe the people of Ontario deserve an explanation. What is it?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Speaker, I would be more than pleased to take a look at this letter that he's talking about. I don't know what he's talking about. As far as I know, no property was exempted. I once again repeat that during the drawing of the greenbelt mapping and plan that took place during the summer of last year and the time when it was actually enacted here, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I did not meet with any particular developer.

The developer that he is talking about, again, I met with in early May, at his request, to deal specifically with respect to our party's commitment related to the agricultural preserve. As I indicated to him that particular evening and as I have indicated to him many times before, the agricultural preserve, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is part of our commitment to preserve that for future generations as agricultural lands in this province.

Mr. Runciman: Now we're even getting additional qualifications, not being as firm and forceful as he was in his answer on TVO. You claim to have avoided meeting with developers who have interests in the greenbelt. Now we have the letter from one of those developers that says that you did meet with him, and as a result of the meeting you removed a parcel of land from the greenbelt. The letter states, "We were told all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt, not only the lands belonging to us." Today's Hamilton Spectator also has confirmation from the head of the Greenbelt Task Force that they had nothing to do with setting the greenbelt boundaries.

Minister, how can you possibly claim that your greenbelt was based on science, given this damning evidence?

1440

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I can confirm that the greenbelt was indeed based on science. The original area that we put out during our platform that we wanted protected was made available during the election campaign. Following our election campaign, we used the best science available from the Ministry of Natural Resources, from conservation authorities, from the Ministry of Agriculture and from the official plans that had been developed by the different municipalities to come up with the best science and planning available to determine what areas should actually be included in the greenbelt. That was done, to the best of my knowledge and belief, for the entire million acres that are now protected.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I'm going to ask the member from St. Catharines to come to order, and I'm also going to ask the member from Durham. I'm having difficulty having you come to order, even in your seat, so I'm going to ask you to come to order.

New question.

Mr. Runciman: I have a question to the Premier. We hear the minister saying, "to the best of my knowledge," and "I believe"—talk about waffling.

Premier, your Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been, I think, caught saying one thing and

doing another. Evidently he takes his cues from you. Your Minister of Municipal Affairs, confirmed as the man ultimately responsible for drawing the greenbelt boundaries, has now been thanked by a developer with interest in the greenbelt for exempting his lands. Premier, do you still stand by your assertion that the greenbelt boundaries were based on science?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Absolutely. I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to some of the science that we relied upon. In particular there were a number, in fact six separate documents, all of which are on-line, and I'll make reference to those. There is the Natural Heritage Reference Manual that was developed in June 1999 by you. It is a very solid document, and that's on-line. The LEAR report is a methodology that's used to assess the significance of agricultural resources within the proposed greenbelt area. That was developed in 1995, revised in 2002, and then we had it revised in 2004. As well, there is A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe. That was developed in the winter of 2005. That's also available on the Web site. There are three others as well that I'd be pleased to draw the member's attention to after his supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: My colleague from Erie-Lincoln tossed cold water on that response last week. That just doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

The story gets worse. Mr. DeGasperis, the developer who thanked the Minister of Municipal Affairs today for exempting his lands from the greenbelt, is the same Mr. DeGasperis who paid \$10,000 to meet with you and the finance minister at the Sorbara household last year.

Premier, your defence last week was that you actually broke your promise to Mr. DeGasperis, so no big deal. Now, however, we see the exact opposite. Your minister met with Mr. DeGasperis while his ministry was drawing the greenbelt boundaries, and suddenly his land is excluded from the greenbelt. What science was the exemption of Mr. DeGasperis's land based on? What was the science used there?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It comes as a surprise to me that this particular individual is pleased with our government's actions when it comes to what land was excluded in the greenbelt.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. One minute, Premier. Member from Erie-Lincoln, I'm going to give you a warning.

Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's no surprise that there are many people who are unhappy with the fact that their lands were included in the greenbelt. In fact, on the weekend, a representative of the Urban Development Institute said, "It doesn't look like"—the government—"acted on any of our recommendations." Again, it's no secret that some people and some interests are unhappy with the 1.8 million acres that we have preserved in perpetuity. But there are millions and millions of Ontarians who are pleased and proud of the fact that they have a government that stood up for their children and their

grandchildren and protected 1.8 million acres. Perhaps the gentleman opposite does not understand that, but we are proud to decide in favour of the greater public interest and to stand up for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Runciman: The science seems to be in culinary science at your secret \$10,000 soiree.

Over 100 acres of Mr. DeGasperis's land was excluded from the greenbelt after his meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Recently, a similar plot of land was sold just south of Mr. DeGasperis's land for \$150,000 an acre. So conservatively, Mr. DeGasperis's land is valued at least at \$15 million.

Premier, you have to appreciate the understandable impressions surrounding this: Pay \$10,000 to get your ear about greenbelt boundaries and, at the end of the process, receive an exemption with at least \$15 million attached to it. That sounds like a decent return on investment. Premier, will you finally release the science behind this exemption?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Earlier, I made reference to three reports to be found on-line, and there are three others as well, which I'll gladly draw to the attention of my friend opposite.

The Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe was tabled in January 2005 and put on the Web site. That's a paper that provides population, household and employment forecasts to 2031 in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Another document, The Application of a Land-Use Intensification Target for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, consists of research on the application of intensification targets in other jurisdictions as a tool for limiting urban sprawl. That has been available since January 2005 on the Web site. And then, of course, there is the Greenbelt Task Force report itself, made available in 2004 and also to be found on the Web site.

There is lots of science; I have now quoted six separate reports. I have said nothing of the 75 scientists, led by Dr. David Suzuki, who said that they support this greenbelt. Again, the member opposite may not be prepared to accept the science, but it is there for all to see.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. My question relates to some new information about your secret \$10,000-a-person fundraiser with developers.

Between 1999 and 2000, the province sold land in Durham region's Duffins-Rouge Agricultural Preserve to local farmers. The lands were sold with easements attached to them guaranteeing that the land would remain agricultural forever. These lands, according to you, are now included in the greenbelt.

But we've just learned that last week, at the same time you were announcing the greenbelt boundaries, a developer paid Pickering council \$2.7 million to remove the easements that guaranteed that the land would remain agricultural.

Premier, can you tell us why a developer who paid \$10,000 to have your ear at your secret fundraiser would now pay \$2.7 million to get rid of anti-development easements on land that you say is protected by the greenbelt?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me repeat once again: The lands that are in the agricultural preserve in Pickering are part of the greenbelt. Whatever the city or town of Pickering does by way of resolution removing some designation on those lands is up to the town of Pickering. But quite frankly, the lands are still part of the greenbelt. They are part of our commitment to make sure that the agricultural preserve remains protected for agricultural and for sensitive environmental purposes. That has not changed. This government cannot be blamed for whatever the town of Pickering may or may not do by way of resolution.

1450

Mr. Hampton: I heard a lot of wordage, but I didn't hear an answer. Some \$2.7 million is a lot of money to bet. I'm trying to figure out why someone, after paying \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear, would go out and bet \$2.7 million to have easements removed when the land is apparently in the greenbelt.

Let me tell you why I think this happened. We know that the Premier made a lot of promises at this \$10,000-a-plate dinner about what land would be included and what land would come out. We know that your greenbelt is a floating greenbelt, that the land that is in the greenbelt now can suddenly come out of the greenbelt and be developed. So we have the developer who pays \$10,000 to have the Premier's ear and then goes out and spends the \$2.7 million to buy the easements. Doesn't this coincidence make you wonder, Minister? Doesn't this coincidence of spending \$2.7 million on land that can't be developed make you wonder just a little bit what happened at this dinner?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, let me thank the majority of that caucus for supporting our greenbelt legislation. They did the right thing. They are making sure that an additional million acres of land is protected for generations to come so that we can once and for all deal with the sprawl situation and the gridlock that has developed in the GTA.

As to any other comment that this member is making, it's just pure and idle speculation. This government cannot tell the town of Pickering what resolution to either pass or reject at their council meetings. He should be asking those questions of the council of Pickering, I suppose, or of the people involved.

This government has done all it can to make sure that there's a greenbelt there for generations to come, so that the children of our children will be able to enjoy the farmland and the environmental land that has been protected for many, many years.

Mr. Hampton: New Democrats support a permanent greenbelt, not this floating operation here, where somebody can pay \$10,000 and have land removed.

I want to point this out: The province sold the Duffins-Rouge lands for \$4,000 an acre, and we're told that if this land were now to be developed—and it looks suspiciously like it might be headed that way—the developer would get over \$100,000 an acre. Boy, that's a neat profit. Ninety-six thousand dollars an acre just like that, after you attend the \$10,000-a-plate dinner. And of course, who's the developer who's wheeling and dealing? Mr. DeGasperis. I guess he realized that if he can get something with the left hand, down the road he can get something with the right hand.

Here's the problem: We need a permanent greenbelt. My colleague the member for Toronto–Danforth, Ms. Churley, has introduced a private member's bill that would give us a permanent greenbelt. Instead of blaming the municipality, will you support Ms. Churley's private member's bill creating a permanent greenbelt so that this travesty can't continue?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to tell this member and his caucus and everyone in this room and outside that we do have a permanent greenbelt; that the legislation that was passed is stronger than any other legislation we've ever had in this province. The greenbelt plan simply calls for a review every 10 years. That's what it calls for. And it has the extra provision that if, for any reason, an acre of land is taken out of the greenbelt, it has to be replaced by another acre of land. No other legislation of a similar nature has these kinds of provisions. It is a strong greenbelt that this government and the people of Ontario can be proud of for many, many years to come.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Health. Community Nursing Home Ltd. is Port Perry's only long-term-care home. It serves 105 residents. In October, the home received \$133,599 in provincial funding to hire more staff. The money was supposed to guarantee two baths a week per resident, more nurses, more registered practical nurses and more personal support workers.

Staff at the Community Nursing Home confirmed that residents are not receiving two baths per week, as they were supposed to beginning January 1, and workers at the home are being fired, not hired. In the gallery today are a personal support worker and a registered nurse who will be laid off as of April 17. Minister, why is the Community Nursing Home not providing residents with two baths per week, and why are you letting management fire, not hire, these staff?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First and foremost, I say to the honourable member that I was in Shelburne this morning, where I visited a long-term-care home facility and found just the opposite. The circumstances the honourable member mentions are troubling circumstances. I'll take this question under advisement and get back to her.

I would say to any member of this House, if they find that there's a long-term-care home in this province that is

not acting in accordance with what we all expect to be appropriate in each of these facilities, there is a 1-800 number, an action line, which has compliance and enforcement associated with it.

We take these matters seriously. We're working hard to make sure, through these associations and the 600 long-term-care homes in this province, that every dollar allocated for the provision of enhanced service to those most vulnerable in these homes will be spent that way.

I'll take up the information provided by the honourable member and endeavour to get back to her promptly.

Ms. Martel: Let me give the minister some additional information and remind him that it was his government that promised that, with the new investment, there would be 1,400 new front-line staff and 600 new nurses.

This home got \$133,590 from your government. Management is cutting two and a half registered nursing positions and 105 hours of personal support per week. That's one less hour of direct, hands-on nursing care per resident per week. Some 12 staff are losing their jobs. The home can't even provide residents with two baths per week now, even though they are mandated by regulation to do so. So it's very clear that, with that loss of staff, it will be impossible for the remaining staff to provide even basic care to residents.

I want to ask you again, Minister: Can you explain to the staff who are here today how their layoffs are going to help the people they want to care for?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I have no interest or obligation to explain that. I take the honourable member's question seriously. I support the tone of it. I'm not satisfied by these circumstances. What I can tell the honourable member is that this morning I was in Shelburne, and the county warden from Dufferin county told me about how the money had been put into effect and talked about the new hiring that had happened in that home and about the enhanced care that resulted. That was the intent of these resources that we brought to long-term-care homes.

I will not be satisfied until I'm assured that every cent directed to these long-term-care homes for expenditures to enhance the quality of care is spent that way. That's why I appreciate the honourable member bringing this forward. If other honourable members have information like this, they can be assured that it will be acted upon and that we will seek to make sure that all these dollars are spent in exactly the fashion they were intended.

Ms. Martel: I don't know anything about the situation in Shelburne, but let me tell you something else about Port Perry that's very troubling.

A bargaining unit representative from Community Nursing Home is also here today. She was suspended from her job for two days, and one of the reasons given in the suspension letter was that she went public with the new layoffs and how that was going to hurt seniors in her home.

I have no doubt that other homes are receiving new provincial money and are firing, not hiring, staff. But with the lack of whistle-blower protection, many other

workers may decide not to come forward to release this information for fear of being suspended or terminated.

Minister, your long-term-care discussion paper talks about whistle-blower protection, but it's not in place. What are you going to do to protect this worker at this home and other workers who want to come forward to speak out but are afraid to do so?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Unlike the honourable member, I'm not going to speculate about a circumstance occurring more broadly. However, I've been on the record saying that our legislation with respect to long-term care, which will be coming forward before this House this year, will include whistle-blower protection, for exactly the reasons that the honourable member mentions.

Here again I say to the honourable member: Send that specific information across the way and we will follow up on it. She can be assured, and all members of this House can be assured, that the dollars we have allocated, almost \$200 million in additional resources for long-term-care homes, will be spent on the provisions that were intended, which is in enhancing the quality of care for those most vulnerable residents.

1500

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: There are serious and widespread questions about connections between secret meetings with developers and changes to the greenbelt boundaries.

Today's revelation is even more alarming. The minister said, "I have not met with any developers," but today that statement doesn't seem to meet with the facts we've learned. Specifically, for some reason, properties belonging to Mr. DeGasperis in the city of Vaughan, in the finance minister's riding, have been exempted from the greenbelt. His neighbours—those to the north, the south, the east and the west—did not get any kind of exemption. One difference: Mr. DeGasperis had a secret meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and he attended the secret fundraiser at \$10,000 a plate.

Minister, surely, if you made this one particular exception for one individual and not his neighbours, you will release the science today on this property to try to defend any integrity left with this plan.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Your plan is to pave the greenbelt. We all know about that. You voted against the greenbelt legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Member from Oxford and member from Simcoe North, I want you to come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: When I met with Mr. DeGasperis, it was two or three months before—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Nepean—Carleton, if I sit down, I don't want you to start shouting. I want to give you a warning.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It was two or three months before the greenbelt mapping and the plan were even put into preparation. He came specifically to meet with me with respect to our commitment to maintain the agricultural preserve as agricultural land. I told him that was our plan, that was our commitment during the election campaign, and that's exactly what happened.

These are the six plans right here, the science on which the greenbelt is based. I would suggest to the member that you read it and come to exactly the same conclusion we did; that is, that the million acres of land we are protecting in the greenbelt, in addition to what is already in the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment, is something that everybody in Ontario—

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: Quite frankly, the minister's answers aren't cutting it, not by a long shot. Minister, you know full well that you released the draft greenbelt study area in December 2003. Those who were caught up in that area knew that every parcel of land was under consideration. After that point in time, you had at least one meeting with DeGasperis. Who knows how many other developers had secret meetings with the minister and his staff? Sir, you changed the boundaries. You didn't change the boundaries to the south. You didn't change the boundaries to the east, the north or the west. You made an exception for this piece of land that would have pocketed the individual at least \$15 million, and that would have gone by your desk, Minister.

By the end of the day, sir, will you release the detailed science around this property in the city of Vaughan, in the finance minister's riding, or will you leave your integrity at the door? Do the right thing, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I will ask one of the pages to walk these documents over to you. This is the science that the greenbelt was based on, the best science available that we used from the Ministry of Natural Resources, from agriculture, from—let's see, where else?—the Greenbelt Task Force. You used exactly the same science to determine the limits of the Oak Ridges moraine plan, and we used exactly the same science in determining the limits of the greenbelt.

We are proud of the greenbelt. The people of Ontario are proud of the greenbelt. David Suzuki and 75 scientists are proud of the greenbelt. I would suggest to you that, in years to come, even you may be proud of the greenbelt as well.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto—Danforth): I have a question for the minister responsible for democratic renewal. For over a year and a half, you've used every delay tactic in the book to avoid bringing in real-time disclosure of donations. Now, with your back to the wall, you've thrown Bill 172 at us in a desperate attempt to

buy just a little bit more fundraising time for your party. You've crammed everything but the kitchen sink into your bill, including giving yourself the power to set up a citizens' assembly, without any consultation at all. The loophole in your real-time disclosure provisions is big enough to drive a truck through.

Interjection: A Mack truck.

Ms. Churley: You know we can't support this bill, this omnibus bill. If you want real-time in our time, drop your bill and pass the bill I introduced on real-time disclosure today. Will you do that?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I say to the member, I'm afraid your bill just isn't good enough. For us, real-time disclosure is five business days. For this member, it's seven days—close, but not enough. For us, this applies to donations of \$100 or more. For the MPP for Toronto—Danforth's bill, it has to be donations of \$500 or more. If there are any loopholes, if there's any Mack truck, it's going to be driven through the bill of that member over there.

Ms. Churley: Minister, that's ridiculous. People aren't concerned about the \$100 donations or the \$500 donations. They're concerned—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'd like to hear the member from Toronto—Danforth put her supplementary, and the government side has been heckling. I'd like to hear the supplementary.

Ms. Churley: People are concerned about the \$5,000-plus that, under your bill, people can still give individually to riding associations and not disclose. That's the loophole. You're stalling, and everyone knows you're stalling. These are the sorts of tricks the Tories used to use and you guys used to denounce.

Before the election, for instance, Gerard Kennedy said, "Why do they insist on sticking to a bill that contains a piece of their election platform smack in the middle of it?... Well, it is clearly—and I say this with as much generosity as I can muster—a government that has lost its way...."

The democratic renewal provision in your bill gives you dictatorial power. The real-time disclosure provisions allow huge donations to go undisclosed. I brought forward a bill that would make real time a reality and leave out the loopholes. Why don't you support it? What are you afraid of?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Only the New Democratic Party would have a problem with the world-leader-in-transparency legislation that has been introduced today. I understand we're now going to be leading the world in terms of transparency of real-time disclosure. Maybe the New Democrats want us to lead the galaxy. But in any event, I'm telling you that Ms. Churley's bill has a big \$500 loophole in it, and it's just not good enough for this government.

I say to the member opposite, let's agree to a process right now. Even better, let's agree to this bill passing

right now. You wanted real-time disclosure; I give you real-time disclosure. Now I need your real-time support for real-time disclosure in the province of Ontario. Let's hear it: real-time support now.

CATTLE FARMERS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Our cattle farmers have been under tremendous stress since May 2003, when the borders were closed to Canadian cattle. Since then, our government has continued to work toward and has anticipated the reopening of the border that was to have happened today. Unfortunately, due to a recent US federal district court decision, this will not be happening. Minister, can you please tell my constituents what this government has been doing to try to ensure that the border is opened in a timely fashion?

1510

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We're extremely disappointed in the decision that was reached by the Montana judge last week. But at the same time, we do remain optimistic, and we're going to continue to be working with the agricultural community to lobby and to move forward. Certainly the Premier demonstrated that last week, not only in his speech that he delivered in Detroit to US business leaders, but as well the Premier talked to representatives from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Ontario Livestock Dealers' Association and the auction dealers' association, to make sure they knew the steps that we were going to continue to take. As well, he took the opportunity to call the outgoing ambassador, Paul Cellucci. So I want to thank the Premier for his continuing efforts in that regard.

Certainly we have tried to do our part, as the government, meeting with both senate and congressional representatives in the United States, to make it very clear that the science has taken place. And I'm confident that when the judge has an opportunity to look at the minimal-risk rule that the United States Department of Agriculture has in place, he is going to see that it's built on sound science, and that border will quickly be reopened.

Mr. Leal: I want to thank the minister for his detailed response. Despite the fact that most farmers were cautiously optimistic with the March 7 opening date, this comes as a huge disappointment. This is a case of politics delaying sound science. Can you let my constituents know how our government plans to deal with this continuing issue of the border remaining closed?

Hon. Mr. Peters: The set-aside programs that have been in place since last September will continue. It's a commitment that we made when the Premier announced \$30 million in support for the ruminant industry. So that support will continue.

As well, we spoke over the weekend with representatives from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. The OCA is meeting today. We're planning a meeting for early next week to bring all the industry players together

to give them the most up-to-date information that we have.

Certainly, the time has come that we need to realize that, as we move forward, we do need a targeted strategy. We have done that in the past; we've demonstrated in working with the various ruminant organizations that, by working together, we can develop long-term plans. That's our intent when we meet. We have been there to support farmers in this province, and we will continue with that financial support.

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I want to go back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There are two critical issues here that we're dealing with: One is the legitimacy of the boundaries of the greenbelt, and the other is the unequivocal statement that you made to TVO that you did not meet with developers to talk about greenbelt boundaries. I think these are very serious issues, Minister, which you have not dealt with here today in question period. Clearly, now you're saying, "OK, maybe I made a mistake. I did meet with a developer, but it was outside the critical period of time."

In reality, this was part of the consideration process; the game was on. He's now admitting he met with this developer. We now know the developer was part of this \$10,000 secret soiree; we know that as well. We're talking about this individual having a parcel exempted from the greenbelt—he's congratulating you for that—a parcel that we know was worth at least \$15 million—\$15 million.

I ask the minister, once again, to tell the public of Ontario why he told TVO that he did not meet with the developers and to release the science behind this exemption.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I believe that what I told TVO, quite frankly—and perhaps the tape will bear this out—is that I determined myself, personally, that I was not going to meet with any individual property owners while the mapping and the planning of the greenbelt was going to be in place, which took place after the Greenbelt Task Force reported, sometime at the end of June or early July. I felt that the people I should meet with were the legally elected people from all the different areas—whether they were at the regional council or at the local council—and the planning officials. It's not that I was prevented from meeting with anybody, but I didn't meet with any developers once the planning and mapping took place.

The meeting with Mr. DeGasperis was at least two or three months before that, to deal specifically with the agricultural preserve. He wanted us to break our promise to keep that as part of the agricultural lands, and I told him, as far as I was concerned, it was part of our commitment to the people of Ontario to keep it as agricultural lands.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): It appears that with every new question the minister's story changes. I do wonder how many meetings he had with developers before August, and then what happened in August. He got collective amnesia, I guess, about all these meetings he had beforehand. Maybe those fundraisers are some sort of down-payment system on future decisions.

Minister, I read through this stuff that you sent over. We've got this from the Web site. Quite frankly, there is nothing in here about the city of Vaughan. There is nothing in here about the individual parcel in question. There is nothing in here about the individual developer in question. There are no answers in there about property 41 in the city of Vaughan in the finance minister's riding.

Sir, we told you that you shouldn't reserve the right to yourself to make these changes. You assumed that power and, sir, you have now used that power to a \$15-million benefit for one particular developer.

I ask you, sir, by the end of the day today, to release the science on this particular property in the city of Vaughan. Tell us why it got an exemption when all the neighbours did not.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As a result of the consultation process with all the various municipal leaders involved, there were some changes made. I believe the Toronto Star—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Well, isn't consultation all part of making sure that you've got it right? And we do have it right. There were certain changes made. The net result of those changes was the fact that 8,500 acres of additional land were placed in the greenbelt.

With respect to the city of Vaughan, to the best of my recollection, and I have to review the documentation, basically the natural science system of protecting the watercourses in Vaughan—they were protected. There were some tablelands that weren't, strictly speaking, part of the natural resource system that were made available for development. But as far as I'm concerned, in the city of Vaughan, the amount of land that was put into the greenbelt equates to about the amount of land that was taken out.

The bottom line is this: A million acres of land are going to be protected for future generations, something that that government didn't care about because they didn't care about the sprawl or the gridlock that existed in this part of Ontario.

COURT BACKLOG

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Attorney General. In December 2003, the Provincial Auditor warned this province that the backlog in our criminal courts was at an all-time, 10-year high, that the integrated justice project was floundering and that the ministry was failing to collect millions of dollars of unpaid and overdue fines.

You and your government's response? "We'll flat-line the ministry's budget." Cases continue to be thrown out,

fines continue to go uncollected, the backlog grows, and it's the front-line staff who bear the brunt of the anger from the public.

Minister, you promised to rebuild our public services. Why are you breaking that promise? How many cases have to get tossed out of court and how many human rights cases ignored before you take action to rebuild the justice system?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm going to get to a number of initiatives that we've undertaken to deal with court case backlogs. But now, actually for the first time, we're going to be publishing statistics on caseload—criminal, civil, family and otherwise—that previously had never been known to the public so that it will be able to track exactly the progress we're making.

Since we formed the government, we have appointed 29 judges to the Ontario Court of Justice. That is one way to deal with the backlog. We've hired 50 crown attorneys and deployed them across the province. We have set up the blitz courts at the sites—and the member will know this: You need to set up the blitz courts at the sites where you've got the biggest problems. You've got some sites where there's very little or no delay; you've got some sites that just generally incur delay. That's the purpose of the blitz courts. We've established case management teams in high-volume areas to monitor caseload and identify charges that might be in jeopardy, and instituted a bail best-practices protocol to reduce the number of in-custody appearances.

I have more to say in response during supplementary.

Mr. Kormos: Attorney General, you see the president of OPSEU, Leah Casselman, here. I want you to know that with her are three OPSEU workers from our court systems: Shelley McCormick, Julie Weber and Ramona Solevilla. These front-line workers ensure that documents are processed, court proceedings are transcribed, fines are collected and victims of crime get the information they need.

You've treated these workers, mostly women, with ongoing contempt, casualizing and contracting out their jobs, denying them full-time work, cancelling their training. Rather than reinvesting, you've brought more cut-backs into the system in the courts, at the Human Rights Commission and now at the Native Affairs Secretariat.

1520

Shortly after you were elected, Leah Casselman asked you to meet with contract workers from the courts. You refused. Why have you not met with the front-line workers? They're the ones who're going to tell you how to address some of these problems. Why haven't you met with these front-line workers in our courts to discuss new ways to rebuild the court system in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I certainly join in the member's commitment to ensuring that we not delay our case flow anywhere in the province of Ontario. I thank all the front-line workers who are working on this. I thank them in person as I go from court to court across the province of

Ontario, and I take their advice on how we can reduce delays.

I'll tell you what they say to me time and again. What they don't want to have happen is what happened in the early 1990s under the NDP government, when the Askov decision came down and more than 80,000 cases got thrown out in the province of Ontario. So we won't be taking any lessons from Mr. Hampton and the NDP when it comes to justice delayed, because that's justice denied.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question today is for the Minister of Health. So many of our communities in Ontario have received the dubious distinction of "underserviced." What does this new deal with the OMA do for the people of Ontario who are in communities that have received the designation of underserviced?

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting to hear the heckles from the parties opposite, who first created the shortage of doctors in this province and then said that the agreements we sought to reach with the Ontario Medical Association were too generous. Now they heckle and suggest something to the contrary.

I'm pleased to be able to say that, as a result of the hard work of two teams negotiating over a lengthy period of time, our government has come to a tentative agreement with the Ontario Medical Association that has been unanimously endorsed by the OMA board. In doing so, I'm pleased to read something that is helpful. A release from the Ontario Medical Association said that they have "unanimously endorsed a new tentative agreement with government that will take steps to improve wait lists, doctor shortages, Ontario's competitiveness with other provinces and access to health care services for Ontario patients."

Our government believes that, in reaching this tentative agreement, investing these resources of the people of Ontario is a very significant step toward reducing the underserviced areas, which were the legacy of that party while in government.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Minister.

Interjections.

Mrs. Mitchell: I also want to say, especially for all the communities that have received their underserviced designation, that this is good news for the people of Ontario, and I'm pleased that the opposition recognizes this as good news. But what will this new deal do to improve access to a full range of health services?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The enhancements to this agreement build on the foundation of the previous work that had been done, which, by its very design, was going to support new models of primary care. The honourable member will know well, because all honourable members who are in touch with their ridings know well, that 213 communities have already submitted applications for

family health teams. This agreement underscores our commitment to primary care, because it associates that agreement with this new model of the provision of care.

I think one significant benefit that patients all across the province of Ontario will soon experience is that this government has suggested that it's appropriate to put the resources of the people of the province behind it and therefore allow us to lift caps which have long been in place for some of the specialists. This has been one of the key constraints of the Ontario health care system, and I'm pleased to be able to say that if this agreement is ratified by the membership of the Ontario Medical Association, caps on key specialties will be a thing of the past in the province of Ontario.

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and some of the issues he was talking about earlier: In the letter that I sent over to him from Mr. DeGasperi earlier today, he talks about Mr. John MacKenzie, special assistant, greenbelt and planning, of your office. DeGasperi was told that "all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt, not only the lands belonging to us.... I ask you to amend the plan to exclude all of block 41 from the greenbelt plan. Not just our lands."

You talked about the tablelands earlier to protect streams and lakes. DeGasperi says, "The balance of the tablelands in block 41 is no different from our lands and should be treated the same."

We also have a letter from Michael Di Biase; you talked last week about the official plan in Vaughan. He takes strong issue with that, asking you to amend the greenbelt plan to reflect Vaughan's official plan: "We have no tolerance for double standards in the province."

I think the people of Ontario deserve a clear explanation from you with respect to the rationale for exempting these properties: a \$15-million realization for this one developer. Please stand up and explain your actions.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): The first thing I can explain is that the date on Mr. DeGasperi's letter is March 7, 2005, which is today, in which he's trying to confirm some conversation that took place, I guess about 10 months ago. So the actual contents and the parcels that he's referring to that—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It would be interesting to know how the opposition got this letter before I as minister got the letter. But that's another issue, I suppose.

All I can tell you is that I am not familiar with the blocks of land that he refers to. However, now that we have this letter of March 7, 2005, which happens to be today, you can be assured that we will take a look at it and deal with it accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): The minister is certainly backpedalling here. His answer almost seemed to say that he doesn't remember if they'd had a meeting in the first place, whereas 10 minutes ago he said that he'd had the meeting. He said it was in May, so it didn't matter because it was in May. But we think it matters.

According to Mr. DeGasperi's letter, he said that he had a meeting with the minister and his special assistant, and that he was told that all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt, so all of the land in question. A commitment apparently was made.

Minister, was it you who were making the commitment? Was it your political assistant? Who exactly made this commitment that the land would be exempted?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, it would be difficult for me to know about particular issues in the million-acre greenbelt. I never saw the letter until the member gave it to me. But Mr. DeGasperi never says in his letter that he raised the issue of block 41 with me. What he says is, "We have had a number of discussions and meetings with Mr. John MacKenzie, special assistant ... of your office, to which he has been very helpful, but we were told that all of block 41 was to be removed from the greenbelt...."

In other words, I didn't even have that conversation about a specific piece of property. The only thing I can recall—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Oxford, I'm going to give you a warning. I hope the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke comes to order too.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As I mentioned before—and at least he agrees on the date, because I did say it was the seventh game of the Toronto-Philadelphia series; he was in a bit of a hurry and didn't really have all that much time to speak to me—all I can remember is that he came in to see me specifically about the agricultural preserve in Pickering, and we said at that time, as far as I was concerned, that we were going to live up to our commitment to retain that land as agricultural land.

1530

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto—Danforth): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. Tomorrow is International Women's Day. In honour of that day, I'm asking you to fix a broken promise to women. Safe housing for women fleeing domestic violence, like second-stage housing, is in scarce supply. Your government hasn't built any of the affordable housing units you had promised. As a result, women in shelters are forced to choose between returning to an abusive home or homelessness.

The Liberals' election platform and throne speech promised to restore core funding for second-stage housing, but this November you did not deliver. You took the money promised to second-stage housing and stretched it thin over a wide variety of services. International

Women's Day provides you with an opportunity to right this wrong. Will you do it?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to address this. This member will probably recognize that today we had a tremendous announcement. My parliamentary assistant, Deb Matthews, and I made it from London. We spoke to 98 agencies that are benefiting today from a new refurbishment fund, which is designated not just to our women's shelters but also to our second-stage housing providers: 98 agencies that made that priority list for funding for things that, frankly, may not be very sexy. It is one-time funding for things like repairing the roof, getting a new furnace, upgrading the wiring, adding, in some cases, bullet-proof windows and doors, basic security items that places like our second-stage housing and shelters desperately need.

Yes, we did it this week. It is the beginning of International Women's Week, something that I think everyone in this House should be celebrating, and I look forward to having an opportunity to continue the long list of some of our achievements so far this year.

Ms. Churley: Like all your announcements, Minister, you still haven't kept your promise—and the Premier's promise in opposition—that you would reinstate funding to second-stage housing. I've been hearing from second-stage housing providers across the province, providers like Family Services Hamilton. They have a message for you: You have put second-stage housing in even greater crises by breaking your promise. As a result, there will be even fewer safe places where women and their children can go to rebuild their lives.

Minister, any statement you make tomorrow on women's issues will ring hollow if you do not keep your promise on second-stage housing. I ask you again, specifically on second-stage housing, will you keep your promise and restore the funding to second-stage housing?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: What I do know is that this year for the first time, we brought second-stage housing agencies back into the government fold. They participated in a significant announcement around transitional support programs that not only went out to counselling agencies, shelters and second stage, but as well we have incorporated them into all kinds of other funding models.

This member opposite should stand up or, frankly, do cartwheels over our domestic violence action plan that we released in December, a \$66-million plan that encompasses four significant areas. One of those that has been lauded by every expert is our public education campaign; supports to the community for those who have to respond to domestic violence; training of front-line workers, which, frankly, we don't do enough of across Ontario; and finally, the justice sector, where we know there are improvements that have to be made. But I must finish by saying we have addressed French-language services in this sector as well, and I hope this member opposite will appreciate—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question, the member for Mississauga East.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister responsible for democratic renewal and his world-leading legislation. During the last election, as I was meeting with the voters in my riding, one of the things that kept coming up was the state of democracy in our great province and the ways we can improve our democratic system, including the way political donations are made to parties. People are worried that our democratic system is not sufficiently accountable and transparent. At the same time, we're witnessing increasing cynicism and decreasing voter turnout, especially among our young voters. My question is this, what will the legislation introduced today do to combat this?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for his question. Firstly, we will begin the process that will allow us to start the citizens' assembly and the citizens' jury on financial reform, so that finally, for once, the people will get a say as to how their electoral system works and how political finance works.

This bill is also going to, for the first time, provide for real-time disclosure of donations to political parties and to the PC and NDP leadership conventions in 2008. We're going to see, for the first time in Ontario—and there isn't anything like it in North America, the Commonwealth or the world—legislation whereby you've got to disclose, within five business days, a donation to a political party, and then it will be disclosed on the Internet by the chief electoral officer. It is transparency that will give people confidence, and we look forward to getting all members' support.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): The Progressive Conservative government cut the number of legislative seats in northern Ontario by one third. Today we learned again that the Progressive Conservative Party endorses the further elimination of one northern seat from the next general election.

Twice, when I was in opposition, I introduced legislation that would have maintained the number of seats at 11. I had the support of my leader and my caucus. The Liberal Party of Ontario committed to these 11 seats in our election document and reiterated that commitment in the speech from the throne. Minister, how does today's legislation address the needs of the people of northern Ontario for a strong and equitable voice at Queen's Park?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I thank the member for his question. I thank the member for his leadership and for the leadership of the northern caucus, and the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, to make sure that we have 11 ridings in the north in Ontario entrenched in legislation if this bill passes. This is not only an expression from a government of a commitment to northern Ontario, but it's a guarantee to those communities, which face enormous challenges in terms of ensuring that their voice is heard in vast geographic areas, that notwithstanding the fact that under the Elections Canada boundary commission

they would end up with 10 ridings, we want to make sure they get strong representation, and that means 11 ridings in the north. Eleven ridings in the north is good news for northern Ontario and good news for all Ontario.

VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would hope that you would help me recognize the Queen's University media students who are in the press gallery today. These budding communication professionals run the Queen's Journal, the Diatribe, CFRC radio 101.9 and Studio Q. They'll be meeting members of the Legislature and the press gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The minister knows that's not a point of order, but of course they're welcome.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 1.2 million people use physiotherapy services every year in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas those who use physiotherapy services consider this an important part of their health care and rely on these services, along with the OHIP funding, in order to function; and

"Whereas the elimination or reduction of physiotherapy services would be viewed as breaking the promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

"Whereas eliminating or reducing OHIP coverage of physiotherapy services, where the patient pays part of the cost, will end up costing the government far more in additional physician, emergency department and hospital visits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario does not delist physiotherapy services from the Ontario health insurance plan, and that assurance is given that funding for physiotherapy services not be reduced or eliminated."

I affix my name, as I support not only the petition but also the Thorntonview long-term-care facility.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm in agreement and affix my signature thereto.

1540

TUITION

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of the member for Kingston and the Islands. This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the students' association at Queen's University:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I affix my signature to this, as I wholeheartedly agree with it.

TUITION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm here today to present this on behalf of the member from Peterborough. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, from Trent Central Student Association:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors and other qualified patients require the continued provision of physiotherapy services through schedule 5 clinics to promote recovery from medical conditions and continued mobility and good health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The patients of schedule 5 physiotherapy clinics request the continued support of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for provision of OHIP-covered physiotherapy treatment to qualified seniors and others in need of these vital health care procedures."

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, and the Minister of Transportation that reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning a tunnel in an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

"Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue and Old Weston Road bridge; and

"Whereas this bridge"—which really is also an underpass—"will be (1) too narrow for the planned TTC

right-of-way since it will have only one lane of traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians. It's about 50 metres long. It's dark and sloping on both the east and west sides, creating a high bank for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under the St. Clair Avenue West bridge, thus eliminating this eyesore with its high banks and blank walls. Instead, it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful, continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

I support this petition 100%, and I'm delighted to sign it.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Again, I'm presenting a petition on behalf of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies, as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor, be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

1550

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, relating to support for chiropractic services in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician's offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment, at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition.

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I do have one more petition I would like to present to you. It's to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment.

"Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St. Clair Avenue West to study potential transit improvements, including the possibility of installing a dedicated TTC right-of-way;

"Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;

"Whereas comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to the EA process, regardless of the objections of the local community;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would restrict left-turn access to neighbourhood streets north and south of St. Clair Avenue, and a barrier down the centre of St. Clair would force the vast majority of residents to make U-turns and go further out of their way just to get home or go to work;

"Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to our local streets;

"Whereas safety must be a high priority for any alternative selected and, according to the ambulance and fire department staff, they don't like to work with right-of-ways;

"Whereas a right-of-way would lead to the reduction or elimination of on-street parking on St. Clair Avenue West;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St. Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR

LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans / Projet de loi 136, Loi sur l'établissement de zones de croissance planifiée et de plans de croissance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I believe the member for Toronto–Danforth was in her speech. So you have the floor.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I'm pleased to be able to not necessarily pick up where I left off, because I can't quite remember where I left off, but I do want to talk about—it was last week—one of the major problems I have with this piece of legislation, and that is the focus on highways.

I have brought it up in this House in regard to the greenbelt legislation, and brought forward amendments which were not passed by the Liberal members sitting on the committee, although I think they were very aware of the problems when I presented them around building the highways "and they will come." I'm sure my colleague from Beaches-East York will want to talk about that as well, because that's one of his favourite expressions. We're both into baseball.

In this case, we all know. We've seen it. The evidence is there. When you build highways, when you build infrastructure like the big pipe, obviously the development is going to come. I referred to four or five highways, and there were two new ones added after the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal a few weeks ago announced their growth plans. In particular, the highway going up to south Simcoe is of grave concern because of what we refer to as leapfrog development. That is one of the major problems with the greenbelt, which of course relates to this bill.

There are a number of problems, but there are two major ones. One is the leapfrog development which will happen because of south Simcoe being left out. And now, to make things worse, we have a highway being extended up there. So there's no question about it: The greenbelt, along with this growth plan, will not achieve its stated purpose, which is to stop or curb urban sprawl.

The second major problem with this plan before us is that even though there's a lot of talk about the importance of moving forward with more transit-based transportation, the government is not putting its money where its mouth is. So there's a lot of good talk around it, but no action. We know that this week the cost of riding the TTC here in Toronto has just increased by 25 cents per ride because the province refuses to fund it at the required level. We know that the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan states that growth needs to occur at transit-supported densities. But at the same time, even though that's very nicely stated—I'd agree with that—they are building new highways through the greenbelt. Unfortunately, and people are really starting to see that now, it's a typical Liberal approach, where they talk a good line but continue to deliver the status quo. That's one of the things that's happening around the greenbelt now.

It is true when the Minister of Municipal Affairs stands up and says that, yes, New Democrats supported it, and there are maybe 80% to 90% of urban dwellers especially, and a lot of rural dwellers, who supported the greenbelt for obvious reasons. We can't go on with the status quo. But now we're finding out about these secret \$10,000-a-plate dinners that have been going on with developers, and a lot of land being moved around—the question my leader posed today. Unfortunately, that takes away the credibility of the government's announced good thing, and that is preserving prime farmland and environmentally sensitive land. Who could not agree with that, except maybe some Tories and developers? You've got to agree with that; we cannot go on with the status quo.

Unfortunately, with the greenbelt passed as it is, not permanent but a floating greenbelt where you can take out very sensitive pieces of land like Duffins-Rouge and exchange them for not so environmentally sensitive pieces of land somewhere in the northern part of the greenbelt—that's not a permanent greenbelt. That is what we call a floating greenbelt. So people are going to lose faith in what the Liberals put forward and what people believed was a very positive thing. Now we're finding out more and more down the line that there are these problems with the greenbelt.

The growth plans that we're speaking about today give clear precedence to new highways and to freight moved on highways. That, again, is staying with the status quo. Policies within the growth plan needed to give clear preference to the movement of goods by rail and the development of new rail facilities over new highways. The evidence is there; it is there in spades. We cannot keep on doing what we've been doing: building new highways and depending on more and more huge trucks and vehicles to be moving our goods around. Not only does this reduce truck traffic on our highways, but it also helps us meet our Kyoto commitments, because the government may have forgotten that moving a tonne of freight by rail is much less CO₂-intensive than moving it by road.

1600

You can't isolate all these factors out. As I said in my speech when I first spoke to this last week, we even have to stop referring to this as "growth." We've got to start a mind change here to sustainable communities; we have to start thinking in terms of sustainability. Unfortunately, what we have before us in this growth plan, and indeed even the greenbelt, is that we're going to see more urban sprawl and more greenhouse gases. Not only does the government have to come up with more money for transit, but the infrastructure costs associated with implementing the growth plan and stopping sprawl are going to require immediate government action now. By the government's own admission, the cost of developing new, and replacing old, infrastructure is estimated to cost in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion over the next 30 years.

We need to see the federal government come in big time. We need to see a partnership of all levels of government to come in to deal with this, but we also need to see a down payment in the upcoming budget, not pushed off to future years.

There are some huge problems with this bill that need to be fixed. We need to take it out to committee so I can attempt to make those amendments. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's a pleasure to speak in support, of Bill 136, Places to Grow. I'm a family doctor turned politician. Recently my own city of Brampton has decided to cut or control urban sprawl.

I was going through a report released recently by the College of Family Physicians of Canada in January of

this year. In that report, they mentioned that there is great evidence of health problems related to unplanned and uncontrolled urban sprawl. There are related diseases—for example, diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular complications, high blood pressure—if you have urban sprawl.

The McGuinty government has a plan for urban growth, and this plan is mentioned in Bill 136, Places to Grow. The McGuinty government has also set aside one million new acres of greenbelt in the greater Golden Horseshoe area to promote and care for stronger, healthier and safer communities. That's why I support Bill 136, Places to Grow.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond very briefly to Bill 136, the Places to Grow plan. What troubles me most about this is that it's another living example of where the government is interfering, if you will, with respect to the understood authorities of the municipal level of government, which is closest to the decision-making process. That being said, I understand and completely endorse the fact that they must respect the purpose and intention of the province's overarching policy position, of the planning policy directions that are required. If you read the preamble, you see clearly what I call the micromanaging of this government. It's rather concerning to me. It exempts the ministry, for that matter, and gives them ultimate authority, and it overrides the authority of municipal plans and the work that's been done by duly elected local persons.

To the extent that official plans are approved at the upper-tier level and by the ministry itself, the official plans themselves have gone through rigorous tests and public hearings with respect to allowing the amount of serviced land to be put to productive use for future growth in the province. In fact, the growth of the province is quite another issue, but it's important that Ontario grows and that communities grow, and it's important that they respect the environmental standards that are in place and have been respected by the local and upper-tier levels of government for some time.

But this bill ties the hands of local municipalities to control their own land use and planning. During the election, the Liberals said that they would scrap the Ontario Municipal Board. In fact, it overrides the Ontario Municipal Board and its duly sanctioned, legitimate authority.

I am concerned at the government's interference and their do-good attitude that only they know what's good for the people of Ontario. In fact, I support the intention, but it's the method by which this government is moving forward that concerns me most.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I'm not sure that it's a do-good attitude. I think it's more a McGuinty attitude.

Having said that, it's a pleasure for me to comment on my colleague's excellent speech, which I heard the other day sitting in the chair and now heard the balance of today. She is absolutely right when she points out what this bill attempts to do. The bill authorizes the minister to OK, to validate—however you want to put it—the

growth plans of municipalities that are experiencing growth. These would be primarily municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe, in the area around Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara Falls.

What it does and does not do I think is open to question at this point. We have seen the efforts of this government to protect the greenbelt, something which we New Democrats believe should be done. But we have also seen how that whole protectionist plan, that whole good idea which we had envisaged when the bill was first introduced, seems now to be falling apart in the wake of scandals that are being suggested here today in question period.

The reality is that this plan and what is being put forward here today is not really going to work unless the government is committed to putting resources where the planning ideas are. Ms. Churley touched upon those in terms of transit. It makes very little sense to be building highways out into the greenbelt, as the greenbelt legislation allows. The reality is that if you want to keep people in an urbanized, city-like state, then you're going to have to build transit. You're going to have to build public transit, as opposed to highways into the greenbelt. That is going to say whether or not this bill works. Ms. Churley is to be commended for bringing out the salient facts behind it.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is indeed a real pleasure to have an opportunity to reflect on Bill 136, Places to Grow. As a former municipal politician in the city of Peterborough, one thing I always appreciated was good, sound planning, because when you have good, sound planning, you have communities that develop in an orderly fashion, where growth and the provision of infrastructure and the provision of transit can go hand in hand.

That, essentially, is the vision that's been clearly articulated by this government on a number of fronts: first of all, our campaign commitment for gas tax to expand transit; secondly, the fine work of our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the greenbelt; and now the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal with the Places to Grow Act. We can see very clearly that we're bringing these elements together for an overall plan to have Ontario at the forefront of how we deal with urban sprawl.

There are many examples of communities in Ontario where growth has gotten out of control. They can't provide the infrastructure to service it, they don't have the transit to service it, and it leads to an environment that's not conducive for living. You can see through this bill that we're moving forward in a very positive way.

I know that for my own community of Peterborough, the city council is endorsing this act, because what it does for Peterborough is that it provides an opportunity for us to grow in the future. We have the infrastructure present and we have the business and manufacturing base to accommodate many more people in our area.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): You've got lots of water over there.

Mr. Leal: We're very pleased that we are moving forward with this bill. We've got the water problem solved, and I want to thank my friend from Simcoe North, I believe.

Mr. Dunlop: We'll see next spring if it's solved or not.

Mr. Leal: It is. Because of this government's immediate action, we're building new infrastructure in Peterborough, not the 12 months that we had to wait with this gang over here when we had the flood of 2002. They were missing in action. But let me get back to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Now, if we'll all calm down, the member from Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Churley: I listened with pleasure to the responses from the members for Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale, Durham, Beaches–East York and Peterborough. Everybody had some good comments to make.

As always, the Liberals are going with the notes that they've been provided about what's in this bill. But if you really read the bill and pay attention to what some others are saying instead of just your government members and your own ministers, you would see that there are some serious problems with this bill. I know the members from the Liberal Party want to do the right thing, and when the ministers say that this bill and the greenbelt are actually going to achieve their stated purpose, they're going to want to believe that. I'd like to believe it too and so would the huge, vast majority of people who supported the government on this greenbelt, who are becoming more disappointed every day as they discover that it isn't a permanent greenbelt, that it is a floating greenbelt, which I said all along. I introduced a private member's bill today to correct all of the problems, including that piece and all of the highways that are being built through the greenbelt, that the Liberals wouldn't accept in committee.

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People are becoming increasingly cynical about what has happened because of the alleged secret deals being made at these dinners etc. The reality is that highways are being built through the greenbelt. The reality is that there are serious shortcomings with the greenbelt, as passed, and the recent release of this government's draft growth strategy makes them more pronounced, because now it's written in stone in this bill that they've even added some more highways. So we're going to see more and more of the status quo. Again, I would call on the members to support sending this bill out to committee so we can see if we can talk some sense into the Liberals to fix this bill to make it actually work.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act. I just want to pick up on a comment made by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. The comment was that we have to stop thinking about growth and start

thinking about sustainable communities. It's interesting to me. I don't think we have a choice about growth. It's estimated that in the next three decades, there are going to be four million more people moving into the GTA. So I think the issue is that we don't have a choice about whether we plan for growth or not. We must do this. We must find a way to plan for growth, and that's certainly what this bill is about.

I'm going to be sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with my colleague from Scarborough Centre.

I just want to talk a little bit about where I was this weekend. I had occasion to drive to Orangeville through my hometown of Richmond Hill. So I was in Orangeville. I was driving through Nashville, through Kleinburg, through Maple, and it is clear to me, as someone who grew up in the 905, that there have been very few plans in place as those developments have gone in. I remember, when I was just moving away from home, when the Baif subdivision was built just south of Richmond Hill. Even at that time, those of us who'd lived in the town all our lives wondered where the plan was and who was thinking about how people were going to access services living in those communities. Well, the growth has been exponential when you look at the communities and the density.

There was an interesting article in the Star this weekend by Laurie Monsebraaten. It was about a man named John Stillich. He is a retired provincial finance expert, and his passion is public transit and urban planning. He talked about the relative densities in some of the cities around the world. There are spots in Amsterdam where the density is 23,000 people per square kilometre; in old Toronto, by contrast, 7,000 people per square kilometre. In some of the new subdivisions we're talking about, the density is 4,300 people per square kilometre. That's not sustainable.

When the member for Toronto–Danforth talks about needing to have sustainable communities, that's exactly what this piece of legislation is being put in place to provide for, and if you look at the purpose of the legislation, it says exactly that: "Making efficient use of existing infrastructure and preserving natural and agricultural resources will contribute to maximizing the benefits, and minimizing the costs, of growth." That's exactly what we need to do.

This bill provides for consultation. Section 7 ensures that there will be notice and consultation with surrounding communities and that people will have an adequate time to write submissions, to give their input.

This bill also recognizes that planning has to cross municipal boundaries, that in many cases historical municipal boundaries are not the logical boundaries for growth planning. So this bill allows for planning across those boundaries.

The other thing it does is require that the official plans of municipalities conform to the growth plan that's been put in place by the province. I think it is our responsibility as a provincial government to have an overall vision of what the growth patterns in the province should

be. In fact, it takes the responsibility away from individual councils and allows them to conform with a broader plan which is in the best interest of the people in the province. It's much like the smoking legislation. It's hard for individual municipalities, small municipalities, to make those decisions about banning smoking, whereas the provincial government has taken the right stand, and that allows municipalities to conform. This growth planning is much the same idea.

As I read this article that was in the *Star* on the weekend, and I think about my own time when I lived in the Netherlands, it is absolutely critical that we start to look to some of the models around the world, where people live high-quality lives in beautiful built form, but they are not in sprawling, low-density, unserved environments. That's the vision this legislation puts forward. It's a plan that allows people high-quality lifestyles in well-served communities and allows families to have those opportunities across the province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mississauga Centre.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Not even close. The other side of town: Scarborough Centre.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, the other side of town: Scarborough Centre. There we go.

Mr. Duguid: The good part of the greater Toronto area.

I'm delighted to rise today to speak on Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans. This bill and the Places to Grow draft plan will, if passed, be an important part of the changes that the McGuinty government is bringing to this province. It's been almost 17 months now that the McGuinty government has been in office, and we are well on the way to bringing in many of the reforms and changes necessary to ensure Ontario's prosperity into the future, but also to preserve and enhance our quality of life. This bill, this initiative, is a very important part of this program. The Places to Grow initiative will ensure that we can accommodate, in an effective and efficient way, the growth we expect to see over the decades ahead.

Let me talk a little bit about the Scarborough experience, because we have experienced a lot of growth in the Scarborough area over the last number of years. I had the opportunity to serve in that particular community as the councillor for the city centre part of Scarborough for nine years, and I'm very proud of the growth we've seen in that area—likely the fastest-growing part of the Toronto area in particular, and one of the fastest-growing areas in the whole greater Toronto area and the entire province. We have seen my community, and the inner part of the urban part of that community, the city centre area, grow like crazy in the last number of years, and we've done it in the right way. We've done it thinking ahead; knowing that we had to have transit, so we've got the RT there to support it; knowing that this is an area where high growth should go; bridging that gap that the community originally would have had probably 10 or 15 years ago, where everybody was against higher densities.

The community in my area recognized that you may not want higher densities right in the heart of your residential neighbourhood, but in areas where it's supported by transit, roads and infrastructure, you need to strive for higher densities, because that makes for better and more sensible development right across the entire community. It also creates a place to be, and that creates economic development. That's what we have seen in the Scarborough city centre area. We have seen jobs created. We have seen CLEAR Net, which is now TELUS, come in and locate their head office there. We have seen a number of condominiums go up. It's a burgeoning, beautiful community to live in, with recreation—everything you could ask for in an urban community. A lot of that came through the vision of great people like Frank Faubert, who was the former and last mayor of the city of Scarborough. So this area has developed very well, and I think this speaks well to the vision that's before us here today.

1620

This government is moving very quickly on a number of fronts.

We're moving quickly to transform our health care system, because we believe in the health of our people. We discourage people from smoking. We encourage people to eat more nutritious foods to discourage obesity. That's part of what the greenbelt is doing as well, because the greenbelt certainly improves the health of our community by reducing smog and congestion and providing green space.

We're also improving the skills and education of our people—a very important part of making sure that we have a thriving economy—by improving our classrooms, and by improving and investing in our post-secondary education system.

We're also working to enhance the prosperity of our people, and that's where this document comes in. With four million people coming to this province over the next two or three decades, we're going to need to encourage that growth. We need that growth. It's important. It's not a bad thing, but it has to go in the right place and it has to be well thought out, and if it is, we will create millions of jobs. In fact, two million jobs are estimated to be created just by that growth alone over the next three decades.

My time is running out. I just want to point to an article in the *Toronto Star* today that talks to the need for a growth plan. It's actually written by Jan Kasperski, executive director and CEO of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. She says:

"...the current body of evidence indicates serious public health problems will continue to escalate unless decisive action is taken to control urban sprawl, preserve green space, improve air quality and protect water sources.

"While we leave the policy debate to others, we are cautiously optimistic, given the Ontario government's recent actions to:

"Set aside one million new acres for a proposed greenbelt in the greater Golden Horseshoe....

"Develop a growth plan and other planning initiatives like the proposed Places to Grow Act that will play key roles in controlling sprawling growth by promoting more compact development."

The experts have got it right on this one.

I encourage the minister to keep going. He's showing great vision, as is our Premier. I'm very proud to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the apparent impression from the government speakers just now that only they have the answer.

If you look at the content of this bill, it's almost—and I mean this in this chamber quite respectfully—anti-democratic. If you read it, it empowers the minister, and the minister alone, to make almost all the interpretations and ultimate decisions, when today, under the Municipal Act, despite their promise during the election, the Ontario Municipal Board is the court of resolution for disputes in planning. The very conflict is that it says—and I'll read the section—the minister is entitled to appoint. It says in section 5, "Advice to minister: The minister may appoint one or more persons and establish one or more advisory committees, consisting of such persons as the minister appoints."

In other words, has this got anything to do with the questions raised in the House today about the secret \$10,000 dinner at the Sorbara mansion? When they pay \$10,000 to get the ear of the minister and the Premier, it leaves me somewhat concerned about the intent of this legislation. In the growth plan itself, it says in almost every section that "the minister shall determine" the policies and goals, such as intensification. It says in section 7, with respect to notice, "as is specified by the minister." In section (c), it says "approved by the minister." There's also "the minister may confer" and "the minister may appoint one or more hearing officers."

They have taken complete control of planning, irrespective of the duly elected persons municipally and regionally. I am very concerned that even in the intent of trying to find appropriate use of land, there's far too much government interference.

Mr. Prue: It's a pleasure to comment on the statements made by the member from Don Valley West and the member from Scarborough Centre. I must comment, member from Scarborough Centre, that it was good to hear Frank Faubert's name mentioned again in this Legislature. You neglected to say he was also a member of this Legislature for many years. He was my friend, and we all miss him enormously.

Going back to the bill itself, I heard the two government members speak. They are very long on saying what the bill is going to do but very short on saying what the bill is not going to do. Quite frankly, when you are going to designate growth areas, as this bill purports to do, when you are going to tell municipalities how they are going to develop, how they are going to grow, you are micromanaging them. There is very little in this bill that tells us where the government's plans or the min-

ister's plans are around automobiles, around highways that conduct those automobiles and produce the smog, and whether the leapfrog development that's going to take place because of the Greenbelt Act is going to intensify automobile use. There is very little here about community designs or how we're going to see communities, hopefully, go up rather than out. There is absolutely nothing at all being said about housing and the fact that we are going to need tens of thousands or perhaps hundreds of thousands of additional housing units for the population as it comes about.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): As mentioned by the member for Don Valley West, we must find ways that the growth development is done for the future of all Ontarians and the agricultural sector.

Lorsque je regarde le deuxième paragraphe de la note explicative de la Loi 136, c'est très clair : « Le conseil d'une municipalité, un office d'aménagement municipal ou un conseil d'aménagement qui a compétence dans une zone visée pour un plan de croissance doit modifier son plan officiel pour qu'il soit conforme au plan de croissance. »

It is clear. Also, in other words, municipalities and communities would be involved in the development of regulations under the Places to Grow Act and in the development and implementation of the growth plans themselves.

It is very important that we give the proper tools to the planning boards of all the municipalities because they are the ones, really, that know what should be done for the future of their communities. Also, they have to listen to what the people want. But one very important part of it is the preservation of the agricultural land.

At the present time, we know there is a lot of pressure from developers and farmers who would like to sell their piece of farmland at this time of year especially, with the difficulties they are going through. But we want to make sure that we do protect our agricultural land by giving the proper tools to the municipalities to plan for the future of all Ontarians.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It is my pleasure to speak to Bill 136 today in the Legislature.

The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell spoke about the preservation of farmland. This is something that the Liberal government has been talking about in their Places to Grow Act and the Greenbelt Act, how they're going to preserve all this farmland. That is exactly what they are going to do: They are going to preserve some land. But they are not doing anything to preserve the farmer.

As a farmer from my area, Mike Donahue, said to me last week, "Ostensibly, what they've done here, John, is they have preserved the habitat by guaranteeing the extinction of the species." That is what they're doing with their greenbelt legislation and their Places to Grow. It's very popular in Toronto, where all the people who live in the city see this story about preserving farmland

and they think, "Oh, boy, that's wonderful." But in fact they're preserving acreage, much of which won't be farmed, because the farmers simply will not be able to sustain an agricultural operation on that acreage. So what they're going to be preserving down the road is a field not of dreams but of weeds. There will be no agriculture in much of this land because they are not doing anything to help the farmer.

While the farmers were here last week, visiting Queen's Park and looking for support, the minister shuffled off to Ottawa. Did he come back with anything? Did he get anything from Paul Martin? Not that I'm aware of. So they're not doing anything to help the farmer, but they want to tell the world that they're preserving farmland. Of course, this is just another example of this government and its overriding mantra, which is, "Other than the Liberal government"—the 71 members of the Liberal Party over on that side of the House—"nobody in the province of Ontario really knows much. So leave it to us. We'll take care of everything. Father knows best."

1630

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Wynne: I want to thank the members for Durham, Beaches–East York, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments.

To the member for Durham: I just want to make the comment that he suggested that we think only we have the answer, and then he cited section 7 of the bill.

Section 7 of the bill actually allows the minister to set up advisory groups to consult on the growth plan. I don't expect the member for Durham to understand why a government would actually put in place processes to consult, because it's not something that that government ever did. So he doesn't understand it at all. What this bill does is set up a process to talk to people, I say to the member for Durham, about what their best ideas are. That's how this government functions, whatever sector we're talking about.

To the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: We recognize the plight of the farmers. What this bill is about is sustainable communities. The fact is that we're going to have growth in this province. Yes, we need to preserve farmland; we need to preserve green space. We've got to have places for people to live, and they'd better be built sensibly and with infrastructure. That's what this plan puts in place.

I completely agree with my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell that there's a delicate balance in terms of the provincial role in setting a vision, putting a plan in place and working with municipalities. Those official plans need to conform to that bigger vision. We're not talking about micromanaging; we're talking about having a vision in this province that is rational and that municipalities can then buy into with consultation. That's what this bill is about.

To my friend from Beaches–East York: Yes, we talked about what this bill is going to do, and unfor-

tunately a piece of legislation can't do everything. So what we know this bill is going to do is put a plan in place. That's the cornerstone of it, that's what we need in the GTA, and that's why I'm pleased that our government has brought it forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to debate Bill 136. In spite of what I just heard, I would like to pat this government on the head for continuing some of the good work that was done by our government.

Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, would probably not be under consideration right now had it not been for the leadership of the previous government, the Ontario PC government. We saw a decade of inaction by both the previous Liberal and NDP governments. We took significant steps, for example, to protect the Oak Ridges moraine, and that set the bar a little higher for these kinds of planning discussions and issues to be negotiated with the municipalities across this particular part of southern Ontario.

It's an area referred to as the greater Golden Horse-shoe. That's an area to the southwest. It incorporates both Haldimand county and Brant county. These two counties make up half of my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, bearing in mind that half of that area is under water, under Lake Erie.

I do have a caveat, however. The way this particular government has written the bill, I would not consider it healthy. It essentially holds municipalities back. It holds them back from controlling their own land use planning initiatives and holds back their own particular agenda. The counties that I represent and neighbouring counties do have different agendas based on the soil type, for that matter, and based on the nature of the farming that goes on in those counties. For example, Oxford county, just to the north of me, has a far different approach to land use planning, as do the smaller fruit and vegetable farms and tobacco farms in Norfolk county.

I do understand this bill was brought in to coincide with or to complement, if you will, the Greenbelt Act by setting out the rules surrounding growth plans, rules to curb urban sprawl. Places to Grow is very similar, in my mind, to the Smart Growth legislation introduced a number of years ago. However, as I've indicated, I feel it's far more restrictive in what it allows our municipalities—our partners—to do when it comes to land use planning.

This act does seem to break one or two promises, a Liberal promise. I remember the Liberals before the election telling us they were going to give municipalities more say. I put forward that this legislation has the potential to give municipalities less say when it comes to land-use planning. I think I recall the Liberals saying they would also scrap the Ontario Municipal Board. I'm not sure where that came from, and maybe that will come down the road.

I mentioned the county next to me, Brant county. I share the southern half of Brant county in my riding. Brant county's staff are concerned about the intentions of

this bill and where this would lead us. The warning was out in Brantford city hall with respect to Places to Grow, that it will “give the province considerable authority to designate growth plan areas and to prepare goals, strategies, policies and criteria regarding a wide range of planning and infrastructure matters that municipal official plans will have to conform to.” They are concerned about this direction. Again, they are concerned about what has happened to municipal autonomy. They are concerned about the balance of provincial and municipal governance.

Mr. O'Toole: Micromanagement.

Mr. Barrett: I hear the expression “micromanagement”; we're not in the policy of managing, let alone micromanaging, as policymakers. Our job is to steer the boat but not to get right in there and roll up our sleeves and row the boat.

The city of Brantford staff feel that while the province may think that local government is important, they consider themselves as now being secondary. Further, Bill 136, in my mind, can be seen as another mechanism for this government to flex its majority position as it attempts to accomplish its goals.

We have a plan before us to create 720,000 acres under greenbelt. I have attended some of those meetings and it goes without saying that's obviously a controversial and perhaps misdirected initiative.

Mr. O'Toole: Ram it through.

Mr. Barrett: Again, I hear in the audience the term “ramming it through.” Greenbelt doesn't address concerns of farmers I've talked to. It doesn't address their concerns about agricultural diversification; it doesn't seem to present an economic plan; it certainly does not present a transportation plan or a transportation strategy for those communities that are affected.

I sincerely hope that this proposed legislation, as it draws in the counties of Brant and Haldimand, would seriously take a look at transportation economics and the need for transportation—obviously the mid-peninsula corridor, as it plans to continue west from the Buffalo area, skirting the northern boundary of Haldimand county, approaching Brant county. The potential of that mid-pen. corridor is very significant as far as any economic benefits for both Haldimand county and Brant county.

Last Saturday night, I attended the annual meeting of the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture. The Niagara North Federation of Agriculture was represented there. The Niagara North Federation of Agriculture is worried that development restrictions would create barriers for many Niagara growers, farmers who rely on that agricultural diversification to essentially ensure the future viability of their farms, something that any farmer thinks about as they see the next generation make plans to continue in farming in an economically feasible way.

1640

Ironically enough, OFA, here last week in great numbers as we know, has concerns with Bill 136. They use the phrase that it is the equivalent of expropriation

without compensation. That's something we have been hearing a great deal of with respect to the greenbelt. Again, because we do not have property rights in Ontario, the potential is there as well if this type of legislation opens the door for that kind of activity. Of course, these farmers, members of OFA, agree with the principle of preserving farmland but they are concerned when they lose the value of their land. What impact will that have on my Brant county farmers? What impact will that have on my Haldimand county farmers now that they have been designated as coming under the umbrella of the GGH, the greater Golden Horseshoe?

OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, is also concerned that this government's attempts at preserving and protecting agricultural lands through the imposition of the greenbelt surrounding the GTA will negatively impact truly sincere attempts at stewardship, attempts to preserve farmland, to protect agricultural land in those areas next to the GTA, municipalities now included under Bill 136 in the greater Golden Horseshoe. There is a concern, and I think this goes without saying.

There's another criticism from OFA in response to the Golden Horseshoe greenbelt: Farmers should not bear the responsibility for creating open land, parkland, land to provide outdoor recreational activities, open spaces for urban people, without any kind of consideration or trade-off or any discussion of compensation.

My colleague from Erie-Lincoln has made a number of points. There is an oft-repeated phrase: In order to save farmland, you have to save the farmer. We heard that loud and clear last Wednesday and we will hear that yet again this coming Wednesday, March 9, as the tractors and not only farmers but other rural landowners and rural residents arrive here at Queen's Park. I sincerely hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be present to speak with his constituents about Bill 136 and some of the ramifications it may have for these people who are on the land.

There are farmers here today in the precinct who have come to the conclusion that they really have no place in the hearts and minds of this particular government.

“Leapfrogging” is an expression we hear constantly and we hear yet again in discussions of this particular piece of legislation. I guess you would refer to leapfrogging as what we see in the Caledonia area, just south of Hamilton in Haldimand county. There has been a great deal of interest this winter in open farmland south of Caledonia for developers.

Developers and homebuilders are concerned as well about this particular piece of legislation and the greenbelt legislation and their effect on the price of homes: the price of existing homes, the price of new homes. Mark Parsons of the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association says that it will be harder for first-time homebuyers to afford a residence. My concern is, to what extent would this extend to Brantford, Brant county; to what extent would this extend to Caledonia and Hagersville in Haldimand county as they come under the influence of Bill 136 and the map that's drawn and labelled as the greater Golden Horseshoe area?

Economics does come into play when policy is developed. Obviously, when you restrict the supply of anything, whether it be homes, vehicles or food, the price rises. That occurs whether demand remains the same or grows: If you restrict the supply, the price goes up.

We all know there are projections of four million people emigrating to the greater Toronto area, the Golden Horseshoe area—by extension, now the newly-named greater Golden Horseshoe area. I do urge this government to come up with a plan. We need a plan that ensures adequate long-term supply of land for housing. That can be done as part of this bill. I heard that consultation will be part of this process, and I sincerely hope that, with this one, the government does take its time. We cannot have legislation that destroys the dreams of young couples, for example. They work hard. They have a vision of building a home or having a home built; they have a vision of children playing in a backyard.

There is an issue that's very important with any discussion of this particular piece of legislation, the greenbelt legislation or any government involvement in land-use planning, and that is the issue of property rights. We live in a province where land grabs have happened in the past. We know that there have been a number of court proceedings and planning hearings that have reiterated the rights of landowners to go about using and enjoying their property. However, we also know that this particular Ontario Legislature has the power to override basic property rights.

I certainly consider property rights as part of our heritage. It has been enshrined in British common law. People come to this province, they come to the GTA and they come to Canada seeking the right to own and to enjoy property. In many cases, it's something they did not have the opportunity to do in their home countries. Private ownership of property and the development of that property has been a key incentive for the very significant economic growth we have been blessed with, not only in the province of Ontario, but across the Dominion of Canada.

Now we have a situation with four million economic immigrants, if you will, coming to Toronto, coming to the GTA, coming to the Golden Horseshoe and, to use the terminology of this particular legislation, arriving in the greater Golden Horseshoe. What do we offer them as an incentive to strive to acquire and enjoy property?

We know the other side of the argument: There is a requirement to build hydro corridors for power towers, to widen streets, to establish landfill sites and to build our roads and railways, and certainly there's a requirement to protect environmentally sensitive land—in many cases, to protect it from misdirected development. However, governments have neglected to provide property owners with a fair hearing, in my opinion, to justify infringing on their inherent right to enjoy property and their right to have appropriate compensation for any devaluation of their land or loss as a result of economic growth, development activity and government initiatives. You cannot remove the value of someone's property, in my view, and at the same time not offer just compensation for that loss.

I made mention of the tradition, the heritage that we have enjoyed over the centuries, with respect to the use of property. Property rights go back to the year 1215, to the Magna Carta, the foundation of our common law in both Canada and Ontario. The recognition of property rights in the Magna Carta is fairly straightforward, and I wish to quote—this goes back to 1215: "No constable or other royal official shall take corn or other movable goods from any man without immediate payment, unless the seller voluntarily offers postponement of this." So if the king takes a man's corn—and that's the old English expression for wheat or grain—the king pays. Regrettably, we have lost that right.

1650

I would like to mention that I attempted to address this issue about nine and a half years ago, in 1995. My first private member's bill was titled Property Rights Statute Law Amendment Act. I'm heartened that in the meetings that I attend in the Toronto area, primarily meetings that have been initiated around the debate on the greenbelt, I hear a great deal of discussion about the right to own land and the right to own property and not have a government taking it without compensation.

On Wednesday this week, we'll be hearing considerably more about this from those who have organized what's referred to as the rural revolution, sponsored in part by the Lanark Landowners Association. They are forwarding a number of resolutions to this Legislature. I don't have time to read two of the resolutions—I could quote in part—and a third resolution specifically relates to the greenbelt and, by extension, to Bill 136.

In the 37 seconds remaining, I will quote in part the first resolution that will be presented next Wednesday. The rural revolution essentially demands a request of the Ontario Legislative Assembly that "the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy. However, this right does not supersede or allow an individual to cause harm or injury to another. Ownership rights shall not be abridged or usurped without due process of law and shall include full, fair and timely compensation."

I'm out of time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Let me say in response to the concerns and comments that have been made by the member that the fact of the matter is, what we have before us in Bill 136 is really enabling legislation, so it's really hard to tell what will happen and we are all operating in a vacuum as a result. So much of the bill, in fact, will be dealt with later and so very little of it appears here in the actual legislation. What needs to be done, really, is going to have to be a matter of both public hearings—that's clear—and also a significant amount of work between affected municipalities and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

What is disconcerting is that the enabling legislation itself really doesn't set out some of the criteria that you'd think would be set out if we're talking about growth—how to have consistent growth, how to have growth that

is sustainable and how to have growth that actually enhances communities. If you look through the bill, you will see that there really aren't any criteria that are consistent for planning across watershed boundaries, across political boundaries, those being municipal boundaries. What you have here is the potential for the plans, as they start to develop, to really be developed at the whim and vagary of different municipal councils, which may or may not result in the government achieving some of the objectives that I hear government members say they want to achieve.

Those are the general principles with respect to criteria that you'd want to have in the bill itself and not wait to have developed in regulation, where in fact those could be changed at any cabinet meeting any Wednesday of the month. So those issues around criteria, to ensure consistency, to have sustainable growth, are things that are really lacking. I think it should be put into the bill so that people have a clear idea of what we're dealing with and what their expectations are before some of those more detailed negotiations get underway with the municipalities that are going to be impacted.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): We call it "questions and comments," so in my two minutes I just wanted to reflect on a few questions. In my mind, I would ask: How do you accommodate four million additional people settling in Ontario over the next three decades? How do you promote a balanced, rational approach to Ontario's future growth? How do you plan for growth in simple terms around the Golden Horseshoe and throughout Ontario? How do you provide for proper housing, for proper commercial development and for proper farming communities within the boundaries of Ontario?

I know that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant spoke about this a bit and mentioned the Magna Carta and the rights that are provided for in there. I say to those questions that the answers are all contained in the act in front of us today, the Places to Grow Act, 2005. Clearly, there is a process in place for proper growth. There are "notice" sections provided for, where the minister will provide notice where our growth plan will take place. It also allows for the minister to confer with municipal or local officials on where and how and when a growth plan will occur. Instead of removing rights, I think this empowers communities, empowers those who make planning decisions as to how best to build our province of Ontario.

We recently passed the greenbelt legislation, and we created a greenbelt around the Golden Horseshoe. Once you do that, the obvious next step is to decide what to do within the Golden Horseshoe and outside of the Golden Horseshoe. This act clearly does that. It's an intelligent way to deal with planning in Ontario, and I'm pleased to support it. I think it has all the right checks and balances in it. If you read it carefully, you'll see that the sections here cover all of the different checks and balances required to make Ontario work properly.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and make a few comments on the comments of the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant on Bill 136. First of all, I think what I'd like to point out to the people here in the House today, particularly the people from Mr. Barrett's riding, is his ability to support the rural economy and the citizens of rural Ontario. Over and over again, at our caucus meetings, as chair of our rural caucus session, as our lead on the OFA delegation that attended Queen's Park here last week as well as our lead on the Lanark Landowners Association, which will be visiting us again this week, Mr. Barrett has been our contact person and has worked unbelievable hours in trying to force the government to listen to what he is concerned about around property rights.

We heard that in the anti-smoking legislation. There's nothing wrong with an MPP who actually does represent his constituents. Mr. Barrett represents many of the people in the tobacco industry, and they have some very serious concerns around property rights, around compensation for their product. They're not asking everybody in Ontario to start smoking; they're asking the government to compensate them properly. Now we're seeing the same sorts of things coming out in—I guess we're going to call Bill 136 the new Magna Carta? I don't know. That's what I heard in the last speech.

Let's face it: There are still real problems with the greenbelt legislation, and I just want to compliment my colleague for a speech well prepared. I want to really compliment him on how proud I am, as a member of the PC caucus, to work with Toby Barrett, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He sticks up for the rights of the citizens of rural Ontario. That is something that the government across the way is simply not doing. Mr. Barrett, I congratulate you for doing that.

Mr. Prue: It's a pleasure to comment on the statements made by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He speaks about property rights. What he had to say was well-thought-out, but I would caution members who might be influenced by that. He quoted the Magna Carta, a wonderful piece of work that was done—

Mr. Yakabuski: Back when Norm Sterling was just a rookie.

Mr. Prue: When Norm Sterling was still a rookie, as you said.

It's when the nobles got together and put the sword to a very weak king and made him do things he otherwise wouldn't have done. But that law is no longer extant; if it were, we'd all be getting at least one jug of free ale a month, which is in the Magna Carta, something I think some of us could support. It was done for the noble people, not for the common people.

1700

In fact, in Canada, we are bound not by the provisions of the Magna Carta, as important a historical document as that was, but by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms came from considerable consultation in this country. It was signed by nine of the 10 provinces, with Quebec being the only

province not to do so. The government of Canada did not allow in the Constitution for the provision of property rights. It is singularly absent. So for any discussion to take place in this Legislature, I think people need to know that property rights are not part of the Constitution. In fact, people are not allowed to do with their property precisely and exactly what they wish when it does not conform with the broader public good. You are allowed to sell it, but you are not allowed to develop it or use it in ways which are deleterious or harmful to society at large. The only thing that is allowed for under the Constitution and under the laws is that you be adequately compensated should the government decide to take your property. I think the argument around property rights is not one for this legislation but for another day.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Barrett: I do thank the members opposite for commenting in the context of some of my little bit of work on property rights. Yes, the Magna Carta does go back I guess it would be more than 800 years, to 1215. It may well be a situation where, 800 years from now, our descendants may be discussing the Places to Grow legislation with the same admiration that we have for the Magna Carta. That would be the year 2800. Whether parliamentarians refer back to today's debate, we can only speculate.

As I mentioned, I did run out of time. I attended a meeting with the member for Durham in Port Perry. There was a resolution presented that evening. This resolution will be coming into this Legislature this coming Wednesday. I do hope the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be here for that one.

I quote it in part: "Private property shall not be re-zoned, re-designated or reclassified in any manner that limits the natural and private use of property without the owner's prior written consent and approval. When, in the course of society's advancement, it becomes necessary in the public interest to abridge this fundamental right to private use, then full, fair and timely compensation shall be awarded."

I really don't see anything wrong with that principle. It's a principle that has been contained within English common law. I look forward to that resolution coming into this House. It's a resolution that I feel has a great deal of bearing on the legislation we're debating today.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Yakabuski: He was having his free jug of ale.

Mr. Prue: Yes. We were discussing the provisions of Magna Carta. Sorry for the time in standing to my feet.

I'd like to talk about this bill. Bill 136, entitled the Places to Grow Act, is an enabling piece of legislation. I'd just like to go through some of the provisions so that people who are watching, or perhaps some of the members who haven't had an opportunity to read it yet, might understand what is the purport of the bill. It designates growth. It says where growth shall occur. It sets up priority urban centres where growth needs to be

managed. Those centres, without naming them all, are probably in and around the Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa areas, where there is already significant development taking place; places like Durham, Mississauga and York region to the north of Toronto. These are called priority centres. There are also emerging centres that have been designated as slightly different under this bill. That would probably, in my view, be cities like Kitchener-Waterloo or Guelph that are starting to expand in their own right and starting to build subdivisions of houses outwards from those cities that have been there, quite literally, a long, long period of time.

It allows for the growth plans and it says what the growth plans are going to be in these urban centres, whether they be priority or emerging centres. It talks about things like intensification, how fast we should allow the number of people per square kilometre to increase, how high the buildings might have to be to accommodate that, how dense the property might have to be, whether or not there is sufficient and suitable parkland. It talks about the land supply and the finite amount of land that is available in the urban centres, particularly in southern Ontario and in the places that have experienced the most rapid growth over the last 20 to 25 years. One need only go in any direction from this very building, to the east, west or north—you would have to go 20 or 30 kilometres to run into land that has not been developed or is not soon to be developed. It is exponential growth that has taken place in the Toronto area, certainly in the last few years.

The old city of Toronto—that is, the city before the megacity—had about 800,000 people at the turn of the century. If you look at the number of people who live in that old city of Toronto today, it's certainly not much greater than that. It is still under a million people, with all of the development that takes place in increasing waves, first of all into the East York and York areas and later into Scarborough, Etobicoke, North York and, after that, in an expansion wave, into Mississauga, York region and Durham. Now it appears to be going much further out than that, the way east to Clarington, and it just goes out and out and out.

Do we need something that talks about reeling that in, trying to define whether or not this is the kind of plan we want? I think we do. This growth plan will talk about planning, talk about community design, but one thing that is missing in this whole plan and something that I hope the members opposite will deal with when this goes to committee—should it go to committee—is the whole question of affordable housing. Where are we going to have the people live in what is a sprawling metropolis that now encompasses some five million people in Toronto and the GTA, and will probably grow by leaps and bounds some more? It has all been largely within my lifetime that we've seen this happen, and I suppose, by the time I die, I'm going to see a lot more of it take place. Where are these people going to live and what are we going to choose and what's this growth plan going to do unless it allows for the provision of affordable housing?

It's one thing what is happening today: Drive up Dufferin Street and see what was farmland five or 10 years ago is row after row after row of what in Toronto would be referred to as monster homes. I don't think one of them is under 4,000 square feet. I doubt very much you will find one under 4,000 square feet, and they are all occupying land that only five to 10 years ago was beautiful agricultural land that grew the food that Ontarians ate, and it's not there any more.

Who can afford those 4,000-square-foot homes? I don't know. Certainly not people I know. I don't know how young families afford it. I don't know how new immigrants afford it. I don't know—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: I do know that there are many professionals, I suppose, who have been able to mortgage themselves, now that mortgages are low, and have been able to afford it. But is that the kind of city we want? I would think that is not the kind of city we want here in Toronto, and I think it's probably not the kind of city we would want in Kitchener-Waterloo or Hamilton or sOttawa or any other place.

I want the government to take a very hard look at this particular act, Places to Grow. There is no provision in the act for affordable housing. It seems to me that if we are going to actually see affordable housing, we cannot allow the sprawl that is taking place, because within that sprawl there is no provision at all for affordable housing. There are no people there of modest or poor income. They can't afford to live there. There are no jobs for them to live there; they do not have the money for a car to commute to where there are jobs. In fact, the communities are very different than the communities you will find in urbanized areas like Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa or Thunder Bay, just to give some examples.

1710

There is also nothing in the bill that talks about environmental assessments, and I think this is a key thing. Within the body of this bill, if we are going to allow the government to designate growth, we have to talk about environmental assessments so that we know, when housing is built, when factories are built, when whatever is built in increasing waves outside of the urban areas, that we have done everything possible to mitigate environmental problems.

In fact, we have done everything possible to clean up some of the old environmental mistakes. You can go to towns like Brantford and see the brownfields around them. You can go to places in Hamilton and see the brownfields and, even here in Toronto, the brownfields that exist along the lake in what was once great industrial land. There needs to be something in this bill, and I hope when it goes to committee there is, that talks about and deals with environmental assessments.

In the United Kingdom they have embarked on a similar type of plan, and I am heartened to see what their plan did. It's much better than the plan that's being proposed here. It says they have a goal that by the year 2008, which is only three years from now, they will have

a 60% marker, where you cannot build in the land until it is 60% developed. Within a city, 60% of the developable land must be built within the official plans before the developers can go out and try to develop something new. This bill sets the standard much lower. It sets it at 40%, and the year is 2015.

So the United Kingdom will be at 60% in three years, and if everything goes according to what this bill says, we will be at 40% by the year 2015. What that means, in a nutshell, is that when the 40% trigger is met in a place like Richmond Hill—let's go a little bit further outside of Toronto—when the 40% of urbanization has taken place, it allows the developers under this bill to free up another section of land. Is that intensification enough? I don't think it is enough. I would ask the framers of this bill and the government opposite that when you're looking at that, come to the conclusion that it simply is not enough.

You have to take a firm belief in what you want to see in this country. The farmers were here last week, God bless them, and they'll be here again in a few more days. They have a message to tell us. They want to see the farmlands preserved. But to be quite blunt and honest, the number of people required to farm in Canada is not any higher today than it was 10, 15 or 20 years ago. The number of farms is down; the number of farmers farming them is down. Increasingly, people are choosing to live in the urban areas. It is our cities that are having the exponential growth; it is not the farming country. It is the cities where people are choosing to come to live.

That is not unique to Canada. It is absolutely solid throughout the entire world. If you go to China, you will see the people are leaving the farms to go to the cities. If you go to India, you'll see they are leaving farms to go to the cities. You'll see that in Africa, in Europe, in Australasia, literally everywhere throughout the world. Canada is not unique; the United States is the same. People are leaving farm country and migrating to the cities. The number of children who stay behind to look after the farm—it's usually one son or one daughter who stays behind and the others migrate out. The farms have to be large in order to sustain the families. They can't be the small places they were just a generation ago.

People also come to the cities, I think, because cities help to make them feel free. There's an old expression from the Middle Ages, "City air makes you free." You might wonder about that because city air tends to be a little more polluted, oftentimes, than country air. But think about it for a moment. When you moved to the city, you suddenly found that you felt free. You felt free to do what you wanted. You felt free to experience what the city had to offer. There was a synergy that grew with the population. There were jobs available. There was a livelihood to be made. The arts were expanded. Go to this city, go to Hamilton, to Ottawa, to any of them and see the lively art scenes, the restaurant scenes, all of the new cultural and ethnic traditions that you may not see in small-town Ontario but that are so commonplace today in our cities.

You have the opportunity for transit. You have the opportunity to move around without the necessity and

cost of owning a car. You have the opportunity to experience what a city will offer, because it's large, because it's concentrated.

We have seen a great change take place in the cities of this province in just the last little while. I can remember when these cities had a much more vibrant local citizenry who used to be involved in the life of the cities. All this predated amalgamation, which has done one thing, and that is, destroyed the democracies that many cities enjoyed. Many of the larger cities and even some of the smaller ones will have a contingent coming down, I understand, on Wednesday from the now city of Kawartha Lakes, again hoping to see the minister, to have him live up to the promise that the Liberals made to de-amalgamate them prior to the last election.

People come to cities for access to services. I look at what is contained within this bill, and there are a number of things that have not been done.

I had an opportunity to read a wonderful little paper by the Neptis Foundation. It's a response to the Ontario government's discussion paper, *Places to Grow*. The Neptis Foundation set out fairly well, on just a page, what they think this bill should include, and I would like to echo some of their comments. I give them full credit for coming to these conclusions, not myself, although I think, given time, I might have come to some of the same conclusions. What they talk about is what is going to be needed to strengthen this bill—not to throw it out, not to abolish it, not to say it's horrible—to strengthen the bill so that it works for all Ontarians. They talk about doing a number of things, and I'd just like to go through some of them here.

The first one is, they believe this bill should have regulatory and fiscal measures contained within it so that any city, any urban municipality, anybody who is subject to the bill itself would have to have a policy on urbanization that coincides with the ability of transit to service that urbanization. If a city chose to develop a new block of land that is contained within its borders, they would have to ensure that there were bus routes into it before the houses were actually built. They would have to ensure that there was infrastructure there so that people wouldn't be going there without schools, libraries and other things, which happens so often in times of rapid urbanization. I see that very often when I go north on Dufferin Street. I see row after row of houses, and I know the kids are having to be bussed a considerable distance, rather than walking to a neighbourhood school that they would enjoy if they lived in a more urban environment.

We need to identify the areas for re-urbanization. Those areas have not been set out clearly. We have set the areas where we don't want to see urbanization—in the moraine and the greenbelt—but we have not set out those areas which need to be re-urbanized. That needs to be done, particularly in brownfield sites and older industrial areas in older cities. There are a great many brownfield sites that, if they could be remediated, would be ideal to house people and jobs and commerce. Some of those exist right in our very backyards.

If you are from Toronto, I invite you to go down to the port lands and look at acre after acre that is sitting there vacant, and has been for many years. The city of Toronto did want to develop them—it was called Ataratiri—but they lost their shirt. I think the province needs to be involved in some of those areas. The technology has changed. The ability to remediate has changed. Maybe the time has come for lands like Ataratiri, or lands in other cities that have what one would call urban blight, to be revitalized.

We need to halt the expansion of urban boundaries. This bill is going to do nothing if we allow municipalities to expand their urban boundaries, to eat up more farmland outside of those boundaries, because as soon as that happens, you can rest assured the developers will be there, building house after house. That needs to be stopped. We need to make sure that future growth is contingent upon infrastructure; that is, the infrastructure must be built before the growth is allowed.

1720

In all ways, we need to reduce automobile use, either by transit, which I think everybody would agree with, but we also need to look at other options. We can transport by rail at a fraction of the cost and with much less danger, many times, to the environment. Nobody has been talking about rail transportation. Rail is a biggie. We need to get back onto the Great Lakes seaway. We can transmit things across the seaway and across the Great Lakes to various places in Ontario much cheaper and with much less harm to the environment than building more highways.

We need to look at changing where people park. Drive outside the city and you will see parking lots, where people can commute: catch a bus or sometimes a GO train to downtown Toronto or to where they work. We need to put in many more of those and discourage people from driving into the inner cities.

We've seen what London, England, has recently done. I know it's controversial and I don't know whether we're ready to do that yet, but they have put a tax on driving downtown. Unless you live downtown, if you drive downtown and you don't have a special licence, you've got to pay a couple of dollars a day for the privilege of doing it. It has really helped to ease the congestion in the downtown area. More and more people are hopping on the tube, as the British call it, and fewer and fewer are choosing to pollute by driving down singly in an automobile.

We need a region-wide system of protection of the green lands, whether or not they are in the greenbelt area. All green lands are valuable to all Ontarians. We need to protect farmland no matter where it exists. Even if it is 20 or 30 or 50 miles away from an urban environment, we need to protect the green space and the farmlands in that location as well for future generations.

Last, but not least, we need to monitor the programs. We need to monitor what is happening through this legislation to land consumption: the average densities that are being obtained in each one of the urban areas, the

activity rate; that is, the rate between the number of jobs created and the number of people who are living in a particular area. We need to look at the transportation supply and monitor it, the modal split between communities, the commuting costs and how much it costs when you build homes and people have to commute long distances to work; and last, but not least, the infrastructure and investment levels within each of the municipalities, to make sure they have the wherewithal to build the sewers, streets, libraries, parks and hospitals before we allow additional people to live there.

If the bill can accomplish all of this—and I hope it can after committee hearings—if there can be safeguards built into it, then the bill will be a good bill. If the bill does nothing but talk about lofty platitudes, then the bill is not going to accomplish what we, as Ontarians, expect. We have an opportunity at this time to really define what we want in our cities. It is an opportunity that I hope will not go wanting.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I enjoyed listening to the remarks of my friend from Beaches–East York. Although he had some positive things to say about the bill, I don't think he has recognized how far-reaching Bill 136 is. I think all of us in the political game know that far too often governments of all stripes are too worried about tomorrow's headlines. This bill looks decades down the road to say, "How can Ontario deal with an increasing population and the strains it's going to put on us and our infrastructure?"

As a very proud representative of Waterloo region, I know my region, which will be directly affected by 136, has adapted this type of thinking. My understanding is that in the mid-1970s, about 30 years ago, the region started to look at planning and how they could deal with shifts in population, growth and infrastructure. We in Waterloo region have been at the forefront of this, one of the pioneers. In June 2003, the region came forward with a growth management strategy. We're projecting that over the next few years 250,000 people will move to our region.

So when you sit down with a group like the region of Waterloo and you talk about Bill 136, what you find is unqualified support for it. As a municipality, they're faced with all sorts of problems and all sorts of challenges, and they need tools from the provincial government such as those that are contained in the Places to Grow Act.

In fact, Ken Seiling, our regional chair, came forward when this bill came out. In the time remaining, I'd like to share a quote that he put out in a press release: "I fully support the direction the government is taking to ensure we better manage growth in this province. Without this leadership we will only see further environmental degradation and an erosion in our quality of life. This reinforces the work being done in Waterloo region."

So I'd just like to say, in representing a community that will be affected by this, that it stands 100% behind this bill.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm glad to rise to debate the comments of my colleagues on Bill 136.

The concern that has been brought up in debate and that I have as well, as an opposition member, is the degree to which the government is taking extraordinary powers behind the closed door of the minister's office. Certainly, Dalton McGuinty, in opposition, campaigned upon respecting municipalities and giving greater authority to municipal leaders. But in office, the opposite has taken place, including in Bill 136. One of the chief concerns that we have, as an opposition, is the ability of the minister to force changes in the official plans of the municipalities. This is reminiscent of Bill—

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Bill 26.

Mr. Hudak: Bill 26. I thank my colleague from York North.

Bill 26, as you recall, gave the minister the ability to declare a provincial interest in a matter before the OMB. So a simple zoning order change or some change in a plan gave the minister the ability to declare a provincial interest and then take that back behind closed doors to the minister's office and cabinet. What made matters worse is, there were no qualifications on that. There didn't have to be any particular reasons given. Time frames were absent from the legislation as well. So there was an extraordinary assumption of power by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

It's similar in the greenbelt legislation as well: an extraordinary regime of planning that the minister can put on to municipalities and property owners within a municipality. So while the Dalton McGuinty Liberals campaigned on expanding powers to their municipal partners, in reality, in Bill 136, in 135, in 26 and in source water, it has been directly the opposite.

As an aside, Roger Anderson, the chair of AMO, said to me one time that he wonders why municipalities are going to be in planning at all when the province is taking all that authority into Queen's Park.

Ms. Martel: In response to the comments made by my colleague from Beaches–East York, I'm glad he identified that what is missing, obviously, from this legislation is affordable housing.

It's not only affordable housing that's missing with respect to being a core element of sustainability of communities; there are other things that are missing as well. For example, the legislation, as it's currently drafted, states that a growth plan may—may—contain some components such as intensification and density of new development; the protection of sensitive and significant lands, including agricultural lands and water resources; and provisions for affordable housing. If those things aren't contained or if the plans are not taking those into consideration as a matter of course—that they shall be considered; that they shall be part of any growth plan—then I can tell you that you're going to see affordable housing either not being developed at all or being developed in a fashion that I would describe as a ghetto one, which will not in the best interests of any community, including the people who live there and the

people who are close to the neighbourhoods and the people who really need to be assured by this government, which made very significant promises on affordable housing, that their needs will be met and they would be able to live in affordable housing that's close to local schools, that's close to shopping, that's close to public transit and that's close to all the amenities all of us want to be close to and be able to access when we live in a community. Those things, right now, are at the discretion of those who are developing the plan. Frankly, if we're going to make any headway at all, for example, with respect to affordable housing, those are things that cannot be at their discretion. They have to be included in any plan that is being developed.

Secondly, my colleague talked a lot about investment in rail, and I would also include investment in public transit. If you want to be able to deal with sprawl and with all those people on the road, you have to make a significant investment in these things, and I haven't seen that kind of financial investment yet by this government.

1730

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I am very pleased to speak to this debate. I always like to respond to the member from Beaches–East York. It's a pleasure to listen to him. He is always thorough and thoughtful.

I have to talk a little bit about the sprawl issue. I have witnessed over the last 10 years a paving over of Ontario that has been indiscriminate and quite frankly unhealthy. Even the family physicians of Ontario will tell you that what we have been living through is unhealthy. If you were driving back from cottage country, it used to take a lot longer to get back to the city. Now you get back to the city very quickly, but then it takes forever to get through the city, the endless city that goes on and on. There is nothing beautiful about this city, there is nothing healthy about sitting there in traffic, and there is nothing productive about it. There is nothing to recommend that kind of growth. So we need to start thinking about these things and planning them.

That is exactly what we're doing with Places to Grow, with the greenbelt, with the heritage act. They all come together in a plan: a plan for the future and one that will make this province a place where people do want to grow up, and that has some sense to it.

We talk about infrastructure and the need for planning for transportation, which is quite true, and I agree with you on the rail thing. However, I would like to see more people being able to walk from their homes to their work. If you are building up communities, there is more likelihood that you can live and work within the same community. That is something that used to be and that has long, long gone by, and we need to get back to that. I have spent many, many years on the highways and byways between Toronto and Hamilton and beyond, and I can tell you that it sucks the life out of you if you have to drive along and just look at that endless sprawl, endless lights, endless concrete. It is not healthy; it's not humane; it's not sane. This is a start to getting things back on a sane track.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Prue: I would like to thank the members from Kitchener Centre, Erie–Lincoln, Nickel Belt and Stoney Creek for their thoughtful comments. You have all talked about different things, and in two minutes one can't really do much justice to it.

But I agree with the member from Kitchener Centre that we need to look at planning. The reality is, I am not convinced that this bill yet gets to where we are going to look strongly enough at the whole planning exercise. I do acknowledge that Kitchener is at the forefront and that in fact many urban centers are looking very strongly at how to contain sprawl. Kitchener is doing a good job, but so are many others in Ontario.

To the member from Erie–Lincoln, who talked about the cities' authorities, I agree that you cannot, on one hand, say to the cities, "We're going to give you authority," and then, on the other, micromanage them. I don't believe that this bill, quite frankly, goes that far. The cities need the authority, but what they need before authority is the money to accomplish what they have already built and to preserve what they have already built.

To the member from Nickel Belt, affordable housing is absolutely key. We cannot hope to expand our municipalities and the number of people who live in them, the four million who are expected to join us in the next 30 years, without a provision for affordable housing.

To the member from Stoney Creek, you are right about the traffic congestion. It is only when you almost get to where you're going that you can't get there. I hope that people will start to take up walking and cycling, as they are in some cities.

One last comment on the heritage act: I sit here perplexed day after day after day in not seeing the heritage act come back for third and final reading. Where is it? I am getting increasingly nervous that if this House is prorogued at some point between now and May, the heritage act may die on the order paper.

Ms. Mossop: I won't let it happen.

Mr. Prue: All right.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure today to join the debate on proposed Bill 136. I will be sharing my time, the remainder of our time, with the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

Growth and urban sprawl have been huge issues in my community of Oakville. Simply put, there do not appear to have been any plans at the local level or the senior levels of government to adequately deal with that growth in a sensible manner.

When you look at some of the issues we were all talking about during the last election—such things as schools, the environment, green space, health care, hospitals, air quality—this bill that we have before us, the Places to Grow Act, brings all those issues together. It wraps them all up pretty neatly and starts us down the road on a path that I think will lead to a much better com-

munity, not only for Oakville but for all the communities in Ontario.

Oakville is a community that's at the peak of its growth. It has been dealing with the pressures of growth for quite some time and continues to deal with them. The council is constantly trying to wrestle with growth issues. As a result of that, the residents of my community understand growth. They understand the benefits of growth: the jobs it brings, the housing for young families, new investment, the migration to Ontario from the rest of Canada, the immigration to Ontario from countries outside of Canada. But from their personal experience, they have seen that a lot of this growth that has taken place has been poorly planned and poorly managed. There has been endless sprawl, gridlock. Somebody told me—I think it's in the document—that our rush hour is now officially 13 hours long. What used to be a rush hour is approaching a rush day. That is just something I don't think any community can live with.

When you look at the inadequate schools that our children and our families have had to deal with in recent years, at the lack of hospital facilities and the lack of transit, you can see why there is a real need for a serious plan that all municipalities can co-operate with and can adhere to that will allow southern Ontario to begin to develop in a way in which all of us would like to see it develop.

One of the cheapest tricks or stunts that I have ever seen politicians, at all levels, pull in recent years goes something like this: It's where a ratepayer stands up and expresses concern over the green space preservation in their community or the lack of community services. The next thing you know, the politicians are responding and telling that person who is doing the complaining that they don't understand the system, they are anti-growth, they don't care about jobs, they don't care about homes for young people, when exactly the opposite is true. They do care about all those things. They care about their community. What is really happening is that the politicians, the bureaucrats and the planners haven't been doing their job properly.

I believe this is a way that allows us to apply the sort of logic our constituents expect us to apply to planning and growth issues. It allows us to apply that logic in a sensible manner.

I am proud to say that this government, after the plan was released for the first time, listened to my community. If you look at the maps that have been issued, when the map first came out, it referred to downtown Oakville as being a growth area. Anyone who knows Oakville knows that downtown Oakville is, sadly, one of very few communities in Ontario that still has a fully functioning, economically viable downtown heritage area, which has been intensified already. As a result of information that I was able to bring to the ministry's attention and that our council was able to bring to the ministry's attention, this has been changed on the map. The map now refers to the growth in Oakville that will be taking place in the mid-town core. That is a sensible place for that growth to take

place. It is around the transit nodes; it's around the transit hubs.

People who care about strong economies, who care about clean air and green space preservation, who want to raise families in a clean environment, love the Places to Grow plan. It's good, sensible planning. It's the start of a process that is going to allow us in the future to build the sort of communities that we will be proud to leave for our children.

1740

They say that about 90% of Ontario's growth is currently occurring in the greater Golden Horseshoe area, and when you look at things that are saying that emissions from vehicles may increase by up to 42% if we don't do anything, and commute times may increase by up to 45%, you realize that somebody has to get a rein on this. I'm proud to say that our government is putting forward some proposed legislation that I believe is going to allow us to control this problem and build the communities we really want to see in Ontario.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): I'm pleased to speak to An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans, Bill 136. Having sat on the city council of Ottawa for three years when we were going through our official plan from 2001 to 2003, it became evident that there should be a better practices system across the province. I think this bill is going to fit that need very well. Our cities must be more sustainable than they are now.

I have something here from the Centre for Sustainable Transportation. It shows that in our core areas, the vehicle kilometres travelled per person per day is six kilometres. As we move out to the core ring, it's 10. As we move to the inner suburbs it's 13, and in the outer suburbs it's 23. The sprawl that we've built in has created a situation where we have to drive four times as much if we're in the outer suburbs than we do in the core. Even six kilometres per day in the core is probably a lot.

Ottawa's experience from 2001 to 2003: What we did there was the amalgamation of 12 or 13 communities. The first thing we went at was freezing the urban boundaries. We had to freeze the sprawl, and then work from there and look for densification within the core urban areas that existed: Kanata, Nepean, Orléans and Ottawa. Densification was to take up the next five years' growth. Hopefully, we won't have to move those roads or sewers or water lines out beyond that densification—all the infrastructure that costs a fortune.

For sustainable cities, we have to get away from single-family homes. They're too expensive. The production of greenhouse gases and use of energy is almost doubled in a single-family home compared to other forms of row housing.

This process that we're going to go through—looking at all the municipalities in the greater Toronto area and beyond—is going to be the only way you're going to get that overview; the only way you're going to get the costs down over the long run; the only way you're going to be able to say where these three million people are going to

be and where we're going to put our infrastructure to serve them. Doing one municipality or one community at a time is just not going to work.

I'd just like to say that I don't agree with the member from Erie-Lincoln. If we follow the old process and don't have that overview, we're going to have the same-old same-old, and we can't do that for the future. Energy costs are going to drive away that kind of development. What this bill is doing is that we're getting ahead of the game and we're going to do the right things for it.

One of the things they're offering now—I wasn't aware of it till I was doing some research last week for a Better Buildings program—was eco-mortgages; that's good. If you live near public transit, you'll get a better mortgage rate.

There are a lot of things we have to do in that way to get energy costs down, to get more sustainable cities, to decrease greenhouse gases. Transportation demand management is one of the methodologies used now. We should have more people working at home. You can fit up an office in the home. Some companies in the US are decreasing their office space requirements by 65%; you now have people working at home just as effectively. They've got all kinds of tracking systems to make sure that the efficiency of the person working at home is just as high—probably higher, because often if a parent's there when the child leaves for school in the morning and there when the child comes home at night, you still get your work done and you probably do more work under those circumstances.

I just received something from CH2M HILL, a large engineering firm in North America. They're into this heavily. They tell me there's a chair now at the University of Calgary, I believe, that looks at transportation demand management. These are very important ways to reduce these terrible transportation costs. If you build the roads, I'm sure the cars will come. That's what's been happening, so we have to take a new approach. If we're able to look at large groups of municipalities at one time, then we're going to plan that infrastructure—the transportation, especially—to make sure that we can get rid of a lot of the needs for transportation. Two cars in each laneway just doesn't do it any more.

I was reading Robert Kennedy's book last week for that Better Buildings program. He said that one-mile-per-gallon more efficient cars would reduce the necessity of going up into Alaska to drill in that great, vast land that is such a natural heritage for the States. All these things come together. This is a great bill. It's going to do the work. It's going to let us learn a lot about making more efficient cities. I urge all members to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Munro: I listened to the member opposite making comments about Bill 136, and I was hoping we might have further information in terms of some of the issues that this bill raises. Clearly, what this bill does is concentrate power in Queen's Park. We know that local planning will be superseded by the direction of the

government, and one of the things he talked about was the question of intensification. This is really open somewhat to speculation in terms of exactly where it will take place and the method that will be used.

I look at one of the areas identified for growth that is in my riding, and that is the town of Newmarket, which, by the way, is completely bordered by areas that are designated as protected countryside. So it does raise some questions with regard to what exactly it means to have intensification. Are we going to have Yonge and Davis Drive look like Yonge and Eglinton? Are people then going to have to take a look at their community lifestyles and see those challenged by that kind of intensification? The government has given us a number of 200 people and jobs per hectare, but we really don't know whether that means 200 people, or 100 jobs and 100 people; there is no definition of this kind of intensification. So I think there are a number of people in our communities who view this initiative with healthy skepticism, because we have a lot more questions than we have answers in this bill.

Ms. Martel: With respect to the comments made by the two government members, let me say that part of the concern I have with this bill is its vagueness with respect to what really will be included in the proposed growth plan, and what the government sees as essential core elements when it talks about growth and ensuring that growth is sustainable for our communities.

There's no doubt that over the next number of years, we are going to see tremendous growth, particularly in the GTA. The issue I have is, what shape and form does that take if the government is not interested in saying very clearly and setting out very clearly in legislation what some of those components are that absolutely have to be taken into account when plans are developed? I mentioned those before and I will mention them again: Where is the requirement, for example, that growth plans take into account intensification and the density of new development; protection of sensitive and significant lands, including agriculture lands or water resources; and the potential or the provision for affordable housing? These things right now, as they appear in the bill, are items that may be included in a growth plan. I think the government should be outlining what are the core requirements that have to be included in the growth plan so that we can have some consistency across these areas where we're going to see tremendous growth, in terms of what is provided, what the investment will be and how that development will be managed in a way that the community can continue to be sustainable.

My other major concern really has to do with a lack of any concrete information about investment. If we're going to do something about urban sprawl, it absolutely, fundamentally means we have to be investing very significantly in public transit and in rail. That will require an enormous public investment. I haven't heard the government talk very much about who's going to be providing the funds for that enormous investment that's going to be required if we're going to have proper growth.

1750

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to rise in support of the bill, Places to Grow. When you look around and you see the type of growth that has occurred in the last number of years, where at one time an amusement park was actually in the middle of nowhere and now is in the middle of many housing developments, and you wonder where the trees are, because there aren't any, or very few, which people have planted because the others have been destroyed, you have to think about how you can develop a comprehensive strategy around development and planning growth. I think what's really important is that you want to be able to include the communities in that planned growth strategy. You can't do it in isolation of where the people themselves will be living. You have to remember—I think grandma said it well—that they're not making any more land, so you can't continue to pave it. You must be able to protect that environment, and do so in such a way that looks at the need for growth and investment in the types of jobs and the types of industry you might want to have. You're right: There has to be an investment in infrastructure, but all of that is part of that planning process.

What it requires, first and foremost, is leadership that says, "We're going to do this because it is the right thing to do for the future." You cannot continue to grow ad hoc without putting in place some thoughtfulness. You can't continue to grow ad hoc by simply getting a ruling that goes in your favour. You must, in fact, invest in the communities a part of their priority of where they choose to go. That's what this is all about. Yes, it will be intensification, but at the same time it is protecting the environment. Yes, there is need for infrastructure around transportation, and that will be part of the discussion that will occur. But none of it will happen in isolation of the people it's meant to serve. That's the best part of this bill, and that's why it needs your support.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm also pleased to rise to speak to members opposite who made comments on behalf of the Liberal Party on Bill 136, the Places to Grow legislation. I think the term that's been used by my colleague from York North is "skeptical." We have some concerns on this side of the House about the bill. From a selfish point of view, looking at local planning from a two-tier system like we have in Simcoe North and in the county of Simcoe, where we have both official plans and zoning bylaws at the lower level and an official plan at the county level, I'm concerned about all the work that's been put into those plans.

I know that most municipalities and planning boards have worked extremely hard with many governments of different political parties to come to terms with those official plans and zoning bylaws. I'm wondering, when we look at Places To Grow, which specifically identifies areas of growth, where we'll draw the line as far as inter-

ference from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and how it will affect the zoning bylaws and OPs of those communities that have done so much work.

We in Simcoe county have very strong concerns about the bill, particularly because we already have one high-growth area, and that's the city of Barrie, which everyone knows is one of the fastest-growing cities in our country.

Again, I appreciate this opportunity to make a few comments. It's been an interesting bill, and we look forward to further debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Reply?

Mr. Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise again. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues.

I'd agree that anything the government does these days in regard to planning and urban sprawl is greeted with a certain degree of skepticism. That could be because people who live in these communities today, who expected their communities to turn out entirely differently, should be skeptical. Previous governments have simply been unable to deal with this type of problem.

You've got to really look at the environment you find yourself in. Ontario's population today is approaching 12 million people. By the year 2031, that same number of people will live in the greater Golden Horseshoe area alone. Simply put, if you take all the people who live in Ontario today, by 2031 that same number of people will be living around Lake Ontario. We need to do something about that. We can't do what we've done in the past. We can't throw up our hands.

I listened to the opposition's remarks and comments. To paraphrase them, one thinks we're doing too much and one thinks we aren't doing enough. That's generally a sign that you're doing exactly the right thing. I think that with this Places to Grow document we are doing the right thing. If we don't plan for this growth, another quarter of a million acres of greenfield and farmland will be paved over. Like a previous speaker said, they're not making any more land.

If you look at the experience that a lot of the speakers on this side of the House bring to the House—and the previous three speakers have all been involved in politics at the local level—all have had to deal with provincial governments that have been unable to come to grips with this issue. I believe we're a party and a government that are able to come to grips with this issue. This is a great place to start, with the Places to Grow document.

The Deputy Speaker: Those observing these proceedings may not realize, but the Speaker has an electronic clock, the Speaker has a beautiful pendulum clock, the Speaker has a watch and the Speaker has a pocket watch. I'm going to refer to the one you can't see and say that, it being near 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1756.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	Deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles

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Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph–Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
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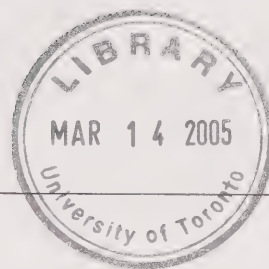
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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 7 March 2005

Lundi 7 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 mars 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act, when Bill 167 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of the second reading vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); however, a deferral of the third reading vote shall be allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Caplan has moved notice of motion 317. Mr. Caplan? No. Mr. Kennedy.

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I will be sharing my time with the members for Perth–Middlesex, Guelph–Wellington, Markham and Sault Ste. Marie, who's also the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education.

It is a great pleasure to join in this discussion this evening because the bill in front of us really does allow us to enter a new era in terms of education in this province, an era where we're able to contemplate success as the main adjective or the main descriptor of what we are accomplishing in education and getting away from the conflict that has characterized it for so many years in the past.

It is a decision for every member of this House to make, that we are able to neutralize, if you like, the kinds of things that are happening in education by delivering the ingredients for long-term stability. This is certainly something that the students of this province deserve. It's something they haven't had for the last number of

years—the last eight, to be exact, or 26 million school days lost to the students of this province; three times as many as the two previous governments combined. It simply was something that the Legislature can't give back, but we would be really, fundamentally in error if we did not learn from it.

So there's an overall approach of the government that is about maintaining an atmosphere of peace and stability, about extending an outlook of respect to teachers, education workers, the people who do the essential service of education in this province, but in a fashion that allows the flexibility that local arrangements can be there.

We have 72 school boards encompassing the province. It's vital that we take the right steps here in this House, the right kind of leadership and direction, but that it matches the local leadership and direction that is going to be the determining factor. It is what they're saying across the province. They want the stability. They want the ability to move forward, to focus on their challenges within education and not have them undermined by some initiative of the government of the day. What they want is this vista that we're offering in this bill, which is the flexibility to have two- and four-year agreements.

1850

What the amendments to the Education Act are about is simply allowing to have happen what the people in education, the people who support education, which I think is a vast swath of this province, want to see, which is strengthening publicly funded education. It can't happen by itself. This House, as has been shown in the last eight years, can have a tremendous negative effect if it either neglects or overemphasizes its role in education. Getting it right is what this bill is all about.

It is not in isolation. We're bringing this bill forward in the context of having begun the restoration of publicly funded education in this province: \$1.1 billion of investment from a government that has been very strapped by the obligations they've had to meet on behalf of the previous government, which didn't have the disclosure and the fiscal probity to be able to meet their obligations before they left office. We've carried that forward, but we have decided that students can't wait. It's what I ask each member of this House to not let happen: that somehow students again get taken hostage to some other debate. I don't know, and I can't explain—it may take members of the caucus opposite to give us the full idea as to why education was turned into such a battlefield in recent years, why that was such a priority for the govern-

ment, why they spent taxpayer dollars and so on. They may wish to do that. They may wish, as their leader has, to say that that wasn't their fault, that they don't want to do that any more, that they're turning a new page. This is the time to show it. This is an example that they can set. If they want to be part of the new era in education, they can be part of changing the terms and making them the kind of terms that will help within education to get the flexibility that's required.

We have made an investment that has had some very specific enabling effects within education; for example, \$165 million to help low-income families, to help the children and students who come from families of recent immigrants, from single-parent households. Those are households that have the potential for every bit of the success of any other household, but we've learned that there needs to be some assistance from the school systems at the very beginning of their academic careers. If we can do that, we are giving them the best chance of unlocking their potential. But those kinds of investments and the other kinds of things that we've done won't take root unless we can allow the undisturbed, going-forward progress that comes with longer-term arrangements, and that's what this bill is. It is about future peace and stability. It is about the will of this House being expressed in terms of how exactly we want that peace and stability to be maintained.

So I put forward this bill in the hope that it is something that every member of this House will see as a new future going forward. When we have offered the kinds of support that we have, I think everyone would agree that it behooves this House to make sure that all of the elements are there. Some of it is about funding; some of it is about what that funding does. For example, our elementary schools today, some 1,400 of them, have reduced class sizes because of our initiative to add teachers. Some 1,100 new elementary full-time-equivalents have managed to ameliorate the size of the classes. It is possible, in those schools—and soon in many more, if we're able to achieve the overall atmosphere that we're looking for—that children will no longer get lost in the crowd. It has happened in too many places across the province, and it is time for this House to take a stand on their behalf. It is an insight that we think will pay for itself by the time those students graduate and go on to their further studies, because it is something that allows teachers and the other support staff to help students at the earliest possible time in their academic career. It's something that would not be possible if we didn't provide the stability that this bill entails.

In addition, we have tried to extend an atmosphere of respect. We have, with the support of this House, eliminated the professional learning program, which was brought out, I think, in error. I think even sections of the previous government understand that it was a provocative bill, not necessarily intended to bring out professionalism but quite the opposite. It was really meant, instead, to undermine a profession that was quite capable of working with the system to produce a very good system that I

think we will be able to show in the months ahead will allow teachers to develop. Teacher development is a very important asset to any education system that wants to have excellence, but it can't be imposed, if you subscribe to the idea that we should respect teachers as professionals. The only way to do that is to make sure that they are part and parcel of how these things get developed.

We have, at virtually no cost to the government, established an education partnership table. We have not stood in our place here and said, "We know everything that there is to know in education," and we've not sought to impose that. Instead, we have invited the principals, the school boards, the teachers and the parents to be represented at a partnership table that reviews the different policies of this government before they come into the Legislature, because we want to bring forward the strength of a very significant sector, a sector that, some seven and eight years ago, was winning awards across the world, recognition for having excellence in education, something we have not been able to accomplish in the last recent number of years, but for which we still have the basic know-how, we still have the basic insight, and we still have a tremendous amount of accomplishment to build on. But we have to make up for those eight years, and we need the help of this House to be able to do that.

Bill 167 will accomplish that. It will be one part of the puzzle of making sure that there are stable long-term agreements between the employees of school boards and the sector itself. And more than that, it's another way to send a signal of respect, to say, "Here is an ability to reach arrangements." For the first time, there is guaranteed funding to school boards. If they're able to enter into four-year arrangements, the funding goes with it. Quite apart from the kind of funding that happened in the past, it actually is what it purports to be: It's 2% of the actual salaries that the boards are responsible for. It isn't an artificial or abstract amount that causes boards to cannibalize some other part of their program simply to be able to meet the costs of the day.

We've done that across the board. We've paid not just for an increase in salaries going forward for four years; we've paid for all the other costs that face school boards. In fact, for the first time since the funding formula was brought in at the provincial level in 1998, there has been recognition of increased costs. I think people realize that in the absence of that, the school system starts to eat itself; it starts to become consumed by those other costs and isn't able to provide the textbooks, the environment and so on. We're not saying that the system is rebuilt simply because of the \$1.1-billion investment by this government; just that we are in the process of that, and this bill is another part of it.

In terms of the dialogues that we're having right now, the provincial government is working on behalf of students with our federations of teachers, with the school board associations and hopefully with the representatives of other employee groups to find a way that provincial policy can make local agreements happen. And this is one of those. We need some certainty and we need the

long-term horizon. This is asking the House for that permission, to be able to offer a longer horizon, also the flexibility, in case it's needed, for two-year agreements. But overall it's saying that this House is prepared to do what needs to be done to make sure education is no longer a battleground. That is something that each of us needs to search for in terms of our priorities in the last number of years.

We have invited the members of this House to visit schools, to be part of—I think it is fair to say that we are now part of the education system; we are playing a significant role. I don't think we have fully grown into those shoes in terms of exercising that, sometimes rhetorically, sometimes by policy that isn't fully thought through, sometimes simply in the way that things from this House have been conveyed to people who work in the field, who have to do the job for us. There is more than a smattering of education experience on all sides of the House, and it isn't going to get exercised unless the insights of this House are translated into the confidence, the feeling of respect and the feeling of goodwill among the workforce. And we accept that responsibility.

With the support of the rest of this House, we are saying to the people in the province that we do accept the responsibility for setting the tone for education. And that tone has been latterly one of peace and stability, of some signs of progress on the academic front, of signs of progress in terms of innovation happening, and coming back within the system, of programs that were erased being replaced, and of new resources coming back in.

We are at the beginning of what I think is a consequential development of a new day in education, and I implore every member of this House to treat it that way, to give it some respect. If they have disagreements, by all means bring them forward, but let this new era find some expression in our schools. And this bill is simply about that: to give the students of this province the peace and stability they need for their future.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Listening to the Minister of Education on this issue, I'm somewhat disappointed, because he knows he laid the law down to the teachers of Ontario. In fact, if you look at Ian Urquhart's article today, it's this high-handed attitude that seems to prevail today with all of their people or the stakeholders who don't agree with the government. What they're basically saying here is well capsulized by Emily Noble, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation. I quote her here from this article from today's Toronto Star. She says, "All I know is that my members have not seen much movement by the boards in terms of negotiations."
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What he's done here is to sort of divide and conquer. What he's doing here is characterizing the teachers, as he said, or as they're suspecting: "Education Minister Gerard Kennedy, who has laboured to cultivate good relationships with the various teachers' unions, did not attempt to conceal his dismay last week when the work-to-rule campaigns began even though negotiations are progressing, in his view."

My wife is a teacher, and I know they work hard. They have been activated recently through various issues. I suspect that what the minister's really doing here is trying to characterize the boards on the one hand, and on the other hand he's arbitrarily assigning them the need to negotiate a two- or four-year settlement. He has not given them any certainty or any confidence in the funding that goes along with that. He knows full well—if he doesn't, he's not paying attention to their main issues. The Elementary Teachers' Federation wants to be equal in access to preparation time. Preparation time is something that has a cost to it. He knows that. He has not advanced any cost. We're waiting for the budget. But clearly, the minister is arbitrarily overruling the board's independence. That, to me, is overarching, not just in terms of this particular legislation, Bill 167, but earlier today, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 136—and you spoke on it when you were here in your normal spot. I like it when you're in the chair, because you're silenced then.

What I really noticed here is that they seem to have the right answer to every question. It's this attitude that underscores my frustrations with much of what the government purports to be doing but is not providing the money for. We see it in Bill 135, in Bill 136 and Bill 167, which is being debated here. Now, to force and to ram this through, they've time-allocated the bill. In Bill 167, it should be remembered—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Northumberland should pay some attention. I'd be surprised if he has read the bill. It's two pages, so it's a long read for him.

My sense here is that this wouldn't be before the House if it wasn't for the work of our critic, Frank Klees. Frank Klees stood in this House and challenged the issue of the day some time ago—on November 29, I think—"that the government would guarantee funding for four-year collective agreements. The directive from the minister was given without the requisite legislative authority, thereby instructing them to conduct their business in a manner contrary to existing legislation...."

That's the point here, that Mr. Klees stood and said, quite honestly, under the Education Act, under the negotiations, that they're provided with the autonomy, as school boards, to negotiate their local agreements. It would appear to me that the Minister of Education is doing nothing more than legislating boards, under his wishes from the Dalton McGuinty central party here, to arbitrarily mandate that they have an agreement of two or four years. That would be fine if he provided the funding. But, as in all things, there's no funding attached to that mandate for them.

I have to bring this up now. I may get time to speak later on; I'm not sure what the time here is at the moment. During the pre-budget hearings of the finance and economics affairs committee—which you, Mr. Speaker, were a member of, and you have a dissenting report—we filed a dissenting report. We heard from the teachers' federations—a valid, viable negotiating agent

on behalf of teachers in both elementary and secondary panels—they're very concerned.

In fact, if you look at the impact in the budget, they know full well—and I'm just flipping through here—from Minister Greg Sorbara's own numbers, that for every 1% in salary increase for the schoolteachers of Ontario—there are 180,000 staff members in Ontario—it means about \$120 million a year annualized. I think that is an important, valid and worthy contribution to the Ontario standard of living. I understand that. As I said before, my wife is a teacher. When you look at what he's doing here, it's one thing to assign the two- or four-year contract, which is all politics, but he's not assigning the money. So what it means is fewer custodians.

Now we see in the clippings today from Ian Urquhart that there is concern. Ian Urquhart in the *Toronto Star* says today that there are disruptions in the educational system today, and it's primarily being forced on the system by a minister who said, and I'm quoting from this article, that "the teachers fell into the 'ingrained habit' of working to rule or striking under the previous Conservative government...."

"I'm disappointed in the sense that I have not been able to get more of a metamorphosis here."

That means agreeing with him. It's code language for, "Agree with me or you're on the outside."

I understand that the minister is arbitrarily imposing his wishes further on the autonomy of the independent school boards of Ontario, with no consideration for the parent councils that have issues across Ontario. I think of my riding of Durham, and I know that in my riding, I met with the teachers, the principal and the vice-principal in the Newcastle school just recently. It was reading week—it was literacy week, actually—and I did meet on one of the discussion papers. I think Ms. Wynne was carrying that issue for the government. They said they felt ostracized. They felt ignored.

Imagine how the boards are feeling now when they are arbitrarily being assigned a collective bargaining deal, and he outlines the amount of money that should be expected. He says here: year one, 2%—that would cost \$238 million; year two, another 2%, \$480 million; year three, another 2.5%, \$790 million; year four, \$1.17 billion. I am surprised that, if they want to say that school boards must settle, these are the terms. There's no recognition of the prep time moving to 200 minutes for elementary teachers. Arguably, I probably support their need to have more prep time. They handle all the subject areas, by and large—secondary schools have the 200 minutes today—and they have less preparation time in elementary. When they're handling more subject areas, arguably, they need more preparation time. The total cost of their imposed agreement is about \$2.6 billion.

We're looking forward to a budget here, and they've committed to no more money, no more tax increases. I put it to you, they've put the teachers in a box and they've put the boards in a box. They have no solution. The consistent message I get from the government is this: They have no plan and they can't manage the fiscal

resources they have. They know they're going to have a larger deficit. They have no choice but to raise taxes or to reasonably negotiate at the board level with the teachers of Ontario. I can tell you that the teachers are waiting to see the harmony they said the teachers would have during the election, yet, at the same time, they're disagreeing with them.

There's nothing in this bill that I can support. It is a disgrace, actually.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let's be very clear about what we're debating this evening. It's a time allocation motion. You may recall that the Liberals promised they weren't going to do things the way the Tories did. The Liberals promised there was going to be a fundamental change in how bills proceed through this Legislature. The Liberals promised they were going to nurture democracy. The Liberals promised they were going to embrace wide-ranging debate. What do we get by way of keeping that promise? We get yet another time allocation motion from the Liberals, another betrayal of the people of Ontario, another condemnation of teachers to yet more jackboot, strong-arm tactics from Queen's Park.

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Make no mistake about it: This bill doesn't only cut off debate on second reading; it ensures that there will literally be no debate—none, zero, not a minute—on this bill in third reading. Furthermore, there won't even be a token committee hearing. The government today—Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals at Queen's Park are ensuring that not one teacher, not one parent, or, for that matter, not one kid, is going to be able to come to Queen's Park or any other place that committees might sit and express their views on this piece of legislation and on the right of teachers to freely collectively bargain their agreements with boards. That's really what the bill is all about.

The bill is direct interference with free collective bargaining. The bill ties the hands of both boards and teachers. The bill shuts the door on creative solutions that might be and, I assure you, have been in the past, arrived at at the bargaining table. The bill is nothing about which this government should be proud and, quite frankly, it's clearly nothing about which this government is proud. Hence their desire, their passion, to rush it through this process, to rush it through second reading and then deny it committee hearings and third reading by way of yet another time allocation motion.

I did want to mention something to you, though. You will remember that last week I talked about the folks down at Gord's Variety on Hellems Avenue in Welland. I was in there again on Saturday because I was in next door at Lee Wah picking up laundry for this week, and Gord's Variety is right next door. You will recall that I talked to you about how Hellems Avenue has been the victim of the sewer project from hell down in Welland; months and months of a street that has been impassable. More than a couple of small businesses have gone belly up. A couple of young entrepreneurs, very impressive

people, have made a major investment in this variety store. It's down at the corner of Hellems and Regent. I talked to you about them before: Marta Bilyk and her partner, John Mscichowski. They are bright and hard-working. These young people are eager to work 16 and 18 hours a day, and they do. But they are going to be forced into bankruptcy if folks in Welland and even places beyond don't drop by and pick up something, whether it's a loaf of bread, a jug of milk, a bottle of mineral water or some lottery tickets, because the incredible construction crisis on Hellems Avenue has attacked this small business with a miserable blow.

The sad thing is that if this small store shuts down, four people are going to lose their jobs. Becky is a Niagara College student. Stephanie is a student at Centennial high school who works there 15 hours a week. She's in grade 12 now, and it's helping her get ready for college or university. There's Alisha, a mom, and Pam, yet another woman. These four workers are going to lose their jobs just as sure as its owners are going to lose their investment if folks in Welland don't drop in at Gord's Variety at the corner of Hellems and Regent, right beside the old Lee Wah Laundry. Lee Wah has been there for a million years; everybody knows where Lee Wah is. I'm encouraging people to drop in there at 237 Hellems Avenue, Gord's Variety. Drop in and just pick up whatever it is that you happen to need, but make a little special trip in Welland to go down to Gord's Variety at the corner of Hellems and Regent.

I'm serious. These people need a break right now. I promised them that I would drop in as often as I could, and I have. I encouraged them to call upon city councillors in Welland to drop in because city council, at the end of the day, is supervising, monitoring this sewer project from hell. I told them, any chance I had on the floor of the assembly here, if folks happened to be watching, I'd encourage them to drop in on Gord's Variety and help these people survive this horrible scenario in their young entrepreneurial lives, and also help four workers keep their jobs, because if there's no variety store there, those workers won't have a job. That's at Gord's Variety, 237 Hellems Avenue, at the corner of Hellems and Regent, right beside Lee Wah Laundry.

A time allocation motion: who would have thought, in the midst of the puffery around democratic renewal this afternoon? Oh, man, did a load hit the floor of the chamber today. The old manure spreader was revved up, by God; all engines were running full blast. Democratic renewal, and then on the same day—the Attorney General marches in here and he stands up, all of him, and, with as much drama as any member of this chamber could ever muster, he declares a new era for democracy in Ontario, authored by Michael Bryant, Attorney General for the people. Phooey. The bill he introduced this afternoon ain't nothing to write home about.

The lack of commitment by the Liberals to any democratic renewal is illustrated by this time allocation motion right here and now. Had it been the sole occasion that the

Liberals have used time allocation, one might be a little more forgiving.

Early on, the government House leader tried to do his little alchemy bit, and he concocted a deal with the official opposition called—what was that called, the housekeeping motion, Mr. Runciman?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): Housekeeping motion.

Mr. Kormos: Well, housekeeping motion be darned. It was a time allocation motion on consent. I give credit to the official opposition for this: They haven't been sucked into one that again. Fool me once—what is the line? Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. The official opposition didn't get sucked into that one. You can fool them once, but they're pretty smart, that official opposition. They're sort of getting quick. They know when they've been had. They know when they've had their pocket picked. They know when they've been mugged, rolled, grabbed by the ankles, turned upside down and had every last nickel and dime shaken out of them. They got hoodwinked; they did, a little bit of quacksalvery going on with that one. Do you like that one, "quacksalvery"? I've been waiting for a good chunk of time for the appropriate moment.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Is that a word?

Mr. Kormos: "Quacksalvery," you bet your boots. That's what we witnessed here, and it wasn't a pretty sight. The Tory House leader grimaced, survived it and, I suspect, said, "You know, I'm going to learn." Really, it's a fool who doesn't learn from his or her own errors. The then official opposition House leader, trust me, was no fool; as prone to or capable of modest errors in judgment as any in a moment of weakness. I suspect he might have been trying to curry some favour with the government. It didn't get him very far, though.

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Mr. Runciman: That's always a mistake.

Mr. Kormos: That's right. Payback is rare and scarce, and the payback days are few and far between.

In the province of Ontario, back in 2003, teachers and their families and their friends and their neighbours voted for change; they did. They had become pretty darned exasperated by eight years of the previous governments and their heavy-handed dealing, their bullying, their vilification of leaders within the teachers' associations and among teachers' unions. Teachers, their friends, their families and their neighbours voted for change in 2003. And just like every other Ontarian, they voted for change but got more of the same, just like we've got here tonight—a time allocation motion, a government that is abruptly cutting off debate and a government that talks a big game about democratic renewal but, I tell you, ignores the standing orders. There are a whole bunch of newly elected people here who don't know what third reading is because they haven't seen it since they've been elected.

As a matter of fact, when I witness—Mr. Runciman may well speak to this. He is one of the senior members of this chamber. He's one of the elders of Queen's Park.

He's good for another 15 or 20 years; he told me so himself. I tell you, as an elder of Queen's Park, he'll know what I say when we observe, over the course of elections past in the last decade and a half, a tendency to have sweeps and these huge majority governments. Do you know what? It's one thing to be elected in a sweep—that's not hard at all; it's another thing to be elected when the tide has turned against your party. That demonstrates some skill and commitment.

I want to say to government backbenchers here: Some of you will be back in 2007-08. Some of you will be; I have no delusions about that. Trust me. Some of you will be re-elected. Not all of you; that's a certainty, and you know it as well as I do. There are going to be casualties. When you are re-elected and sitting over here in the third party zone, turf—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, take a look at the history over the last 15 years. Let's not be naïve about this. When you're back in late 2007-08—or mid-2008, or late 2008, because, quite frankly, I don't believe that the government is any more interested in keeping its October 4, 2007, promise than they are in any other promise that they've made. When Liberals are sitting over here as third party members, and when they're squealing—remember that? What was that movie? Deliverance. When they're squealing about—

Mrs. Mitchell: That's a little over the top.

Mr. Kormos: It's an old movie. When they're squealing about the government of the day not showing enough heed or concern or care for the standing orders, I might be inclined to pick up a copy of the standing orders and say, "Why didn't you read the standing orders back in 2005? Why didn't you explain to your House leader"—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: You've got a rather feckless point of order over there, Mr. Speaker; you'd better tend to it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Mississauga West.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The subjects of duelling banjos and points of order aside, interesting as they are, may we respectfully request that the member for Niagara Centre address the topic under discussion, pursuant to standing order 23?

The Acting Speaker: I have to say, I don't think that's a point of order. That's precisely what he was talking about: the standing orders and the subject of debate. Please proceed.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you, Speaker, for as wise a ruling as this chamber has ever heard, and I know we can expect more.

As I say, in late 2007, maybe mid- or late 2008, when Liberals see bills for third reading, it will be like history for them. It won't be part of their reality or their personal experience.

There's a reason for this. I know that from time to time bills get sent to committee after first reading. I think most of us understand the reason for that. But we know that in

the traditional order of things, after second reading debate—because, don't forget, there's no first reading debate—bills go to committee. Quite frankly, what this bill does is seriously interfere with the ability of teachers to negotiate their contracts with local boards, just like it interferes with local boards and their ability to negotiate contracts. Trust me, this bill will serve neither teachers nor boards well by forcing them into a mould. And when teachers and boards aren't served well, kids aren't served well.

This government talks about peace in our educational system. I tell you, with this bill and its chronic underfunding of education in this province, this government will surpass the last in its ability to generate unrest. Already we've got a board talking about work to rule. Is that the climate of peace and stability the Minister of Education says he's provoking? He's provoking all right; he's provoking work-to-rule campaigns.

Teachers will not, nor should they have to, accept the responsibility for shouldering the burden of a deficit they didn't create, certainly a deficit they didn't deceive anybody about in the course of the last election campaign. Teachers want to be treated fairly too, because so many of them have seen themselves at the end of the line for too long.

It is a sad day here at Queen's Park when Liberal backbenchers, who want to wrap themselves in the cloak of democratic renewal, don't stand up to their own little corporate bosses over there: the House leader, the deputy House leader, the deputy deputy House leader and the deputy vice-assistant House leader.

There's the House leader's staff making notes, keeping an eye on the Liberal backbenchers. There's the House leader's staff, the little rat patrol. No backbencher is going to get away with speaking up against this government, not as long as the House leader—look, I'm not being critical of them. They're doing their jobs. They're here conducting the surveillance that House leader's staff are compelled to do. So I tell you what, House leader's staff: Why don't you leave for five minutes and see if your absence will nurture some courage amongst these Liberal backbenchers, so that if only one of them stands up and condemns this bill for the bad legislation that it is and, more importantly, condemns time allocation for the jackboot style of parliamentary conduct that it is, they'll earn themselves a re-election in their own right. Step out of the room for five minutes. Give these people the luxury and the liberty of being able to conduct their business here in this chamber without the threat of coercion or retaliation from their House leader's office.

But no, the minions don't leave. They're not paid to turn a blind eye. The minions are paid to take notes. The minions are paid to keep records. The minions are paid to report back. The minions are paid to detect any little spark of independence promptly so it can be quashed, so it can be dampened with buckets of cold water. Not much when it comes to democratic renewal, is it, Speaker? Not much at all.

Time allocation from a government that only a few hours ago tried to generate some spin and hubbub. Take a look

at the evening news. I haven't seen it yet; it's on at 10 o'clock and 11 o'clock. You read the morning papers tomorrow—Mr. Bryant's effort at spin bit him on the butt like one of those nasty, mean pit bulls he's been chasing for the last three months.

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Trust me; there was no pickup, there was no take out there in the scrums for this democratic renewal—a couple of rehashed right-wing policies that have become dated in their own right. Then, at the end of the day, less than straightforward, less than candid, less than realistic but for lip service when it comes to democratic renewal and the right of individual members to stand up and be counted.

By the way, I'm not going to support this time allocation motion. I'm going to be voting against this time allocation motion. I have never been partial to time allocation motions—never. The job of people here, among so many other things, is to stand up and be on the record in telling folks where they stand. Time allocation is an opportunity for Liberal backbenchers to stand up and let their folks back home know that they, as individual members, as representatives of their communities, expect this place to be a place of debate, expect this place to be a place of consultation, expect this place to open its doors to the public so that members of the public can participate in the committee process and have their views about a particular policy or piece of legislation heard.

Unfortunately—and I'm still looking—if the search for a courageous backbencher were a Diogenic search, that lamp would be burnt of its fuel in short order, let me tell you. Just think about it, because that old Diogenic search for the courageous person would be a long time pacing back and forth. The light would start to flicker, dim and then the flame would go out entirely.

What are the public expecting of this government? The problem is they expect less and less. That's one of the problems. They've been burned over and over again. The broken promises become the norm rather than the exception. It's no longer news. It's the old dog-bites-man, man-bites-dog syndrome.

The news story, the headlines in the province of Ontario, would be: "Liberals Keep Promise—Hallelujah!!!" "Liberals Keep Promise—People of Ontario Amazed, People of Ontario Struck, People of Ontario Delighted, People of Ontario Relieved." If only that were the headline, because it's not even news any more that the Liberals have broken another promise, is it? It's not news at all. It's become the mundane, it's become the tedious, it's become the irrelevant, and people have grown increasingly indifferent.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: OK. One of the opposition members here raises a by-election that's going on right now, a by-election that's scheduled for March 17, St. Patrick's Day, right? That's a pretty good test of the government, I suppose.

I expect that Dalton's been out in that riding of Dufferin. I expect the Premier's been out there regularly. I suspect the Premier has been out there and that he's put

his personal stamp—is there a Liberal candidate in that by-election?

Mr. Runciman: That's the rumour.

Mr. Kormos: I don't know.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The guy's name is Duncan, son of Dwight.

Interjection: It's Bob Duncanson.

Mr. Kormos: Dalton McGuinty is who people are going to be voting for or against.

Mr. Dunlop: It's Dwight Duncan's son who's running up there.

Mr. Kormos: I want to say to the voters in that by-election that if you want more of the same, if you want to see democracy stifled, if you want to see free speech quashed, if you want to see Parliament brought to a halt by jackboot tactics, by members of a Legislature who have no idea what a third reading is because they've never sat through one—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, think about it. Think about committee work here since October 2003.

Again, Mr. Runciman is much older than I am, or at least he has been here much longer than I have. His history here surpasses mine by darn near a decade—it does.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Who's in better shape, though?

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Runciman is.

I say there are members here who have never witnessed a third reading debate, who have never witnessed real committee hearings, who have never seen a committee literally, actually, in reality, bona fide, in good faith, sit down, hear from people, make notes, consider the submissions and then, by God, introduce amendments or vote for amendments that are in conformity with constructive criticism made by any number of members of the public.

I saw it on the last committee I was on. I saw it on Bill 132, the pit bull committee. There was some brilliant stuff put forward by some high-priced expertise that didn't cost the people of Ontario a dime. The best experts in the world offered their expertise to the committee around the area of controlling vicious dogs. One of the propositions was to require, by provincial statute, the spaying or neutering of all dogs that aren't show dogs or breed dogs. When I heard it, not just from one expert but from several, it made eminent good sense. Quite frankly, the minister's own staff, when they appeared, understood—

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

Mr. Kormos: You've got another pathetic point of order. You better take care of it, Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member's reputation precedes him, so I want to understand what it is we are debating here this evening, which bill, because he has gone completely wayward, as he is wont to do on most evenings.

The Acting Speaker: The point is well taken. He's straying a little. I would ask you to get back toward the bill. It's motion 317.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would point out that the member does this quite often. Again, where is he going with this debate?

The Acting Speaker: I have already ruled that it is a point well taken, and I've asked the member from Niagara Centre to please stay on the issue.

Mr. Kormos: Far be it for me to challenge the Chair, and I'm not going to, but for you to suggest I'm straying only a little might imply moderation in my maturing years, and I dispute that in its entirety. One should never do anything by small measures. Go big or go home. It has served me well for a significant chunk of time.

What the government members are doing tonight is being lured into voting for a time allocation motion that they promised they'd never bring—not the first one either and, I tell you, not the last one. This is a hoodwinking yet again of the people of Ontario. For government backbenchers, in the vote that will flow upon completion of the time-limited debate, in and of itself, on the time allocation motion—for one to stand up and be counted would be worthy of applause. For two to stand up and be counted would be worthy of a headline on page 3. For three or four to stand up and be counted would be good for a column in every one of the major Toronto newspapers within the next five days.

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I'd love to see some courage among Liberal backbenchers. I'd love to see some backbenchers say, "I don't care about the pay I get for my perk job." To the minion from the House leader's office, tell Dwight Duncan to take his perk job, like the old country and western song goes, because "I can't be bought."

I want a Liberal backbencher to stand up and say, "I can't be bought with a crummy position as vice-chair or vice-vice-vice-deputy House leader whip," or something. I want someone to say to the government House leader, "Take your perk positions, take your phony payola and your grease, Dwight Duncan, and put it where the sun don't shine. I'm going to stand up and I'm not going to be whipped. I'm not just a little, wimpy house dog. I'm something of substance."

It would be nice for one of these Liberal backbenchers to stand up and show that they're something other than merely paper trained—some independence, some courage of their convictions, some real enthusiasm for democracy. It would be a delight.

We're going to be blessed with some comments, in short order, by the leader of the New Democratic Party, Howard Hampton. I'm going to cede the floor to him, because he was eager and enthusiastic to speak to this time allocation motion. I look forward to the vote, because I know where I am on muzzling democracy: I'm against it; have been, will be. I'm voting against this time allocation motion. Fair-minded members of this Legislature will join me.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Good to see you in the chair, Mr. Speaker, as always. You're really getting into the role now; I can just tell.

I find it somewhat strange to follow the member from Niagara Centre. He talks about people with conviction. He talks about a person like me, who is a member of the backbench of the governing party, saying, "You must have conviction. You must vote against this motion."

I remember that the former member from Perth, Karen Haslam, who was a minister of the crown in the NDP government, quit her position as a cabinet minister when it introduced the social contract, gave up the money, gave up the limousine, because she believed in her convictions. Others in the NDP rump did not. For them to come into this House and preach to us that somehow they are holier than thou and that they have always held themselves to the highest standards—none of them now is proud of the social contract. I've been to meetings where they've said, "Well, that was a mistake. We shouldn't have done that." Karen Haslam had the strength of her convictions, but others did not. So I find it odd to be lectured to.

I just wanted to talk about my friends in the "progressive chameleon party." I'm reading here—I want to talk about this; it has to do with education and with the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. I know the member from Durham, who is also on the committee with me, was there. He tells us that the "progressive chameleon party" issued a dissenting report. I just want to quote their report: "For example, as recently as the 2004 fall economic statement, the Liberal government acknowledged that there exist significant wage pressures in Ontario that must be resolved in the coming months."

Here is where we get to the good part—

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Who said that?

Mr. Wilkinson: This is just the dissenting report.

Did you know that, "The official opposition condemns the Liberal government's attitude toward our valued public sector employees"? What was that? They thought they were "valued public sector employees"? Did I miss something in the last 18 months?

"We recognize that government must continue to find ways of offering services that the people of Ontario depend on and deliver these services in an efficient and effective manner." Oh, that's interesting. I think that could be interesting.

"This job cannot be accomplished without the partnership of the professionals and experts who work for the government's public service partners. Whether they be doctors, nurses, teachers or one of the thousands of dedicated individuals working in the Ontario public service, these are the individuals who ensure that the delivery of government service is effective, efficient and in the best interest of the average Ontarian."

Who said that? Who wrote that? The "progressive chameleon party," who spent eight years running down the public service in this province, treating them like the enemy. That's who writes the report now. My God, John Tory is fostering a revolution throughout the right wing

of this province. He goes on. I see a bit of a theme here, a theme of amnesia from the new leader, who has obviously influenced this:

"It is the responsibility of elected officials to work hand in hand with the public service and make them willing partners in the government's efforts to deliver core services to Ontarians who need them the most. The Premier himself has recognized this as a matter of great concern." He said, "To protect and improve public services, to protect existing jobs and add more jobs, we are asking our public sector partners to be reasonable and responsible at the bargaining table. We've got to do more than just increase wages. We've got to be able to find a way to hire more nurses, more doctors, more teachers, and create more training opportunity for skilled trades people." My God, they're actually quoting my Premier now in their dissenting report. I find that quite odd.

Friends in Ontario, this gets even better. "As the government moves forward, it must ensure that any investments made into programs such as health care, education and social services, are targeted directly at the delivery of these services, and not to overinflated salaries and governance. This does not mean that our public service partners must not go without reasonable increases to their wages and benefits, but our province cannot afford increases that are not kept in line with the rate at which our financial base is growing."

Well, well, well, haven't we seen the light. Who exactly came up with the 22% cut? Who decided to cut ODSP? Who decided to cut Ontario Works in this province? It wasn't our party; we're increasing it. Now the Progressive Conservative Party—

Interjections.

Mr. Wilkinson: Yes, yes, just help them out there. I'm sure there's a Liberal to help you out. That's been raised with you guys. Frozen solid for eight years. That was after the previous NDP government, who of course had a big heart and decided that the people on ODSP needed to have a break.

I find it passing strange that we have to come into this House and be lectured by a party that caused the problems that we are trying to fix. We had dissension in our schools. Our children were in war zones. The government of the day decided to get elected by going after people: by going after teachers and saying that the teachers were the problem, that the unions were the problem, that somehow there were only some people in Ontario who counted, and the other people were the enemies of the state. What they bred was dissension. I distinctly remember that former education minister with very little education who decided that they were going to, in his own words, "create a crisis." Our children were in those schools where they were creating that crisis. We're the ones who have inherited the problem.

I am proud of the Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy. I am proud of him because of the work that he is doing. He has worked and is working so hard with all of those in the education sector to try to bring about peace and stability. Now, I know some people in the

other two parties would be eager for us to fail. Nothing would make them happier than if we were to fall right on our face and if the children in our province were to be subjected to more lost days, as happened in the previous governments. But we're not going to fail, because Mr. Kennedy has a vision. The Minister of Education has a vision for this province about education. He talks, and he walks the talk, about respect.

You talk to the leadership in the public school board and the Catholic school board, you talk to parent groups, you talk to teachers, and they know that the channel has changed. They know that the minister respects their opinion. We may not always agree. That is the nature of democracy. But to say that the Minister of Education has changed the dynamic from one of dissension, rancour and strikes to one where we're offering our time and our best efforts to work together and to put those precious resources into the education system: I think that goes without question.

I don't think there's anything wrong with peace and stability in the school boards. I'm a parent. I have three school-aged children. I think peace and stability is actually quite nice. Last time I checked, it was conducive to good education.

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I just find it really very difficult to stand here, as someone who was elected, and see other parties change their stripes, to watch the NDP go on and on about how somehow we are, I think the term was "jackbooting" our way through democracy, and this from the party who imposed the social contract. Last time I checked, I don't think that just went through in a cakewalk around here. I thought that was quite contentious, and I thought the government had to whip all of its members. But there were some brave souls, like Karen Haslam, the former member from Perth, the former NDP cabinet minister. She had the strength of her convictions, because she felt it was wrong. I disagreed with her, but I respect her for what she did. She had the strength of her convictions. The good people of Perth decided not to re-elect her, and other members in this House have been re-elected. And I give them credit for whatever their political skill is, to be able to change their stripes in the middle of a debate and try to find their way back into this House.

To be lectured by that party, particularly to read, with such interest, the current position—you know, I was on the committee with Mr. O'Toole. I say to the member for Durham, I remember your comments; I remember the comments of Mr. Flaherty. Somehow, I don't see your style and your comments in committee really being reflected in this dissenting report. I see Mr. Tory's fingerprints all over this. It sounds to me that maybe you must have some boys in the centre. Maybe their whiz kids have come back and decided, "Oh, let's just to go back to saying whatever we need to say to get re-elected. Let's just oppose whatever the Liberals have to do."

I rise today because I think it's time to get on with this debate. I think it's time that we have peace and stability. I'm for the Minister of Education, I'm backing our party,

and I'm proud to do it. I urge all members to turn the page from the past, and let's move ahead.

Mr. O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm disappointed by the member from Perth—Middlesex, who failed to mention Bert Johnson, who stood always for democracy—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. This is not a point of order.

Further debate? The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Runciman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my congratulations to you in your new role as a Speaker of the House. I know that you will do an excellent job, based on your past performance.

I am not rising with a lot of enthusiasm to participate; I am going to take a few moments. Certainly listening to the member from Perth—Middlesex and knowing the tone of the debate from government members—

Mr. O'Toole: It's discouraging.

Mr. Runciman: It is, as my colleague says, discouraging, because if you've been around here for a while, we've all heard it before. It's not something that gets us all enthused.

I understand where government backbenchers are coming from with respect to this kind of time allocation initiative and their support for whatever government initiative might come to the floor of this place, without reservation. We've been here about a year and a half. I think we know that those who aren't members of the executive council aspire to be members of the executive council. We suspect that mid-term there will be a cabinet shuffle of some sort this summer: Some people will leave cabinet; a number of new people will move into cabinet roles. Then those who have either been moved out or have not had the call from the Premier's office will finally realize that they are where they are, and that is not going to change unless there is some sort of a significant crisis where a minister or two have to be moved out of their roles. Perhaps that will encourage a bit more openness and frankness and willingness to take issue with some of the initiatives of this government and some of the breaking of significant promises that we have seen occur in their first year and a half in office.

The member from Niagara Centre was speaking earlier about seeing members of various governments of all political stripes failing to speak up and failing to take a position because they hoped they had career opportunities, or they felt that it was the right thing to do. Even if it was something they strongly disagreed with, that their constituents strongly disagreed with, they stood in their place when they were asked to vote in support of whatever measure might come before the House.

I want to point out that the member from Niagara Centre is one of those folks who will have been here for 20 years by the time the next election rolls around, and whether you agree or disagree—and I frequently disagree—he has had the courage of his convictions. The social contract—we've heard that tossed around the assembly on a number of occasions this evening during his comments, but he stood in his place and voted against the

social contract. In a week or so, I will have been here 24 years, and I can go back to my first term and being in a committee with one Stuart Smith, who used to occupy this seat, and some of you will remember Stuart Smith, a fine man. He came into committee as the Leader of the Opposition when the government of the day had decided that it was a good idea to buy a significant interest in an oil company, Suncor.

As a small-c conservative, I was sitting in that committee, and after Smith had made his contribution and expressed his concerns and called for a review of the documents that substantiated this significant decision by the government, I put my hand up and said: "I think the Leader of the Opposition is making good sense and that all of us as members of the assembly should know what the criteria were for making this kind of significant decision for the people of Ontario to be spending over a quarter million dollars to buy an interest in an oil company. We have the right to know." I said that as a government backbencher. And the member indicated it caused quite an uproar—there's no question about it—with respect to the media. They don't see it happen too often. But I stood by my convictions, and I like to think that I've been able to do that throughout most of my career, and I'm still here.

The member mentioned Ms. Haslam, who did stand by her convictions, and unfortunately, she didn't survive. I think if more of us did that on a regular basis, there would be more respect for all of us in this place, more respect for this assembly, if we had more of that freedom to actually stand up for what we believe in, what our constituents want us to stand up for, what we believe is right. Regrettably, I don't see that on the early horizon.

I have hopes with our new leader, John Tory. I believe he is quite sincere in terms of wanting to see a new sense of civility around this place in terms of the way House business is conducted, and a greater degree of freedom, not just for government members, but for all members of this assembly, in terms of how they vote on issues, how they vote in committee, how they conduct themselves around this place, and the role we have to play as members of this assembly, and not participate in debates which for the most part—as with what we're doing here this evening—we sitting on this side of the House know are not going to have any impact in terms of the end result.

The government has made a decision to cut off debate. What they're doing here—for those folks who are watching and don't quite understand time allocation—is bringing in a bill to limit debate on a piece of legislation which will allow them to bring in four-year contracts for teachers across the province of Ontario. They want to limit debate; they want to get on with this business.

Mr. O'Toole: Shut down democracy.

Mr. Runciman: My colleague says "shut down democracy," and I think that perspective could stand up to scrutiny: no committee hearings, very little opportunity for the public—let alone the people who are going to be directly impacted by this legislation—to have any

real impact on the decision-making process. That is truly regrettable. I certainly can't say that it has been the sole purview of this government. Our government used time allocation in a significant way; there's no question about it. There were other reasons for that, but I don't want to get into that this evening. The reality of what we are talking about here tonight is a promise made by the Liberal Party of Ontario when they were running for election, one of 231 promises, many of which have been broken, discarded, amended or played around with. And this is another one with respect to democratic reform. We heard fine words from the Liberal Party when running for office, but once in office—and I saw a comment from I think Ian Urquhart, in the *Toronto Star*, in a column about the independence of members in this place, saying there's less independence. Certainly his paper was very critical of the former Conservative government in terms of the ability of members to have a role in deliberations, but this Liberal government is even more restrictive. He could not recall and I cannot recall one single member of the Liberal Party standing up to vote against a government initiative since they've been in office, a year and a half. Certainly in our case, we did have members of an independent stripe or streak—

Mr. Kormos: You've still got them.
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Mr. Runciman: And we still have them and will continue to have them. We've encouraged them. That hasn't happened in the Liberal Party of Ontario, despite their promises to the people of Ontario.

We saw an example of the kind of shabby approach to this, which I don't believe the people of Ontario will buy: the Attorney General standing here today, talking about bringing in legislation with respect to real-time delivery of the names of donors to political parties—this, after significant pressure from the opposition parties and from the media and, I suspect, from the public with respect to a \$10,000 secret soirée that was held at the residence of the Minister of Finance's brother that may have had an impact on the drawing of the boundaries of the greenbelt. We don't know that for sure because the Premier and his friends will not release the names of those individuals. But certainly one of the men who attended that event and paid \$10,000 indicated in a letter today that indeed there was some favouritism shown. He may have benefited to the tune of at least \$15 million.

What's the impact in terms of the public of Ontario? We've all talked about cynicism. Premier McGuinty, when he was Leader of the Opposition, talked about getting people re-engaged and involved in the political process, caring about what happens in the Ontario Legislature. We've seen what's happened since. The number we have is about 40 broken promises out of 231. An SES poll done a month ago for Sun Media indicated that when people were asked what their first reaction was to Premier McGuinty, 41%, unprompted, reacted with one word that starts with "L"; it's unparliamentary, so I can't use it. I think that is a pretty clear indication of what's happening.

I only have a minute to go, but I want to talk very quickly about the farming community in this province, rural Ontario and what's happening. When they look at what's happening here—the Premier getting \$48 haircuts, living in a taxpayer-subsidized mansion in Rosedale, taking a limo to go one block, taking a plane at \$700 an hour to go to Peterborough, having \$400 million to pour into a Liberal riding in Windsor to build a casino hotel, while our farmers, our rural community, are significantly suffering—what's the priority of this government?

And you force-feed through this Legislature a time allocation motion, which takes away the freedom of the teachers across this province to negotiate collective agreements. It's another shameful indication of the lack of sincerity on the part of the government, on the part of the Liberal Party of Ontario, with respect to the very important promises they made to the people of this province 18 or 19 months ago. It's truly regrettable.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to take part in this debate. I want people at home to know why we're here tonight, what's going on. In fact, this is a time allocation motion, otherwise known as shutting down debate, where the government uses its majority to limit the amount of time that can be spent debating a particular bill. There's some irony here because, before the last election, members of the McGuinty government said over and over again that they believed in open and transparent democracy and that time allocation would not be used, that time allocation would never be used. Yet here we are. And this is not the first time the McGuinty government has used time allocation, but this is part of the long list of times when the McGuinty government has used time allocation to shut down debate. You could say I take delight in pointing out this irony, that 19 months ago it was all about open and transparent democracy and not using time allocation, and now the government can't wait to use time allocation.

Why is the government using time allocation on this bill, though? What is in this bill that's got the government a bit embarrassed? I think people at home deserve to know that. You see, the Conservative government, wanting to avoid the collective bargaining process or collective bargaining altercations with teachers potentially in an election year, passed legislation which they called the Stability and Excellence in Education Act in 2001 that said that all teachers' collective agreements had to extend until August 31, 2004. In other words, the agreements had to be for three years. The government of the day decided that they would, for the time being, simply step outside the boundaries of free collective bargaining and set an artificial date. They wanted the collective agreements to expire after the next election, or at least outside the boundaries of the next election.

What I found interesting were the comments that many members who are now members of the McGuinty government had to make about the Conservatives when the Conservatives brought forward this legislation. For example, there was the member for Parkdale–High Park, Mr. Gerard Kennedy, who is now the Minister of

Education. This is what he said during debate in 2001: "Today, they'll say, 'We demand there be a three-year contract. We demand that that happen so there are no untoward activities around the time of the next election.'"

Then he goes on to say, "You think you're going to fix problems in education, many of them of your own making, by ordering people around. You're going to boss them, you're going to make them do things and, in this case, you're going to get three-year contracts just because you say so."

The member for Parkdale-High Park, to say the least, was quite critical of the Conservative project to extend collective agreements for three years. He was very critical. In fact, he referred to that legislation with scorn, with disdain. He couldn't be more critical of it.

So what do we have in this piece of legislation, Bill 167, the Education Amendment Act, put forward by the McGuinty government? What do we have? We have the McGuinty government doing exactly what the Conservative government did. We have the McGuinty government doing exactly what the now Minister of Education, then McGuinty education critic, used to scorn and disdain.

Somewhere, someone said, "Choose change." I think that was during an election campaign. Someone said, "Choose change." But what I see here is the McGuinty government duplicating exactly what they were scornful and disdainful of when the Conservatives were doing it. The McGuinty government is doing it, the same thing, except when I read this legislation, it looks to be more draconian, more directive, shall we say, more manifestly almost—I won't use the word "totalitarian." But it interferes with collective bargaining even more than the Conservative bill. It interferes with collective bargaining even more than the bill which members of the McGuinty government used to scorn when they were in opposition, because this bill says that all new contracts must be either two years or four years in length. This means that all contracts will either expire August 31, 2006, or August 31, 2008. Then it goes on to say that any negotiated contract that does not expire on one of those two dates will be deemed to do so. Anything under two years becomes a two-year agreement expiring in 2006; anything over two years becomes a four-year agreement expiring in 2008. This is even more directive than the Conservative legislation of 2001.

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What was very interesting were some of the aperturances that went along with this legislation and the announcement of it by the Minister of Education. Because before he even introduced the legislation in the House, he wrote a letter to the boards directing the boards that the collective agreements would have to be either two years or four years and also saying—this is the letter of November 29, Mr. Kennedy's letter to the boards laying out exact terms for all school boards in upcoming labour negotiations and ordering the negotiation to be either two- or four-year contracts. The letter informs boards that they will not receive funding for any teacher salary increase above 2% a year for the next two years. If

boards sign four-year contracts, they can offer a 3% raise in the final year. When would the final year be? Let me think. Oh, the final year would be after the next election campaign. Now that is interesting. So the letter informs the boards they will not receive funding for any teacher salary increase above 2% a year for the next two years. If the board signs four-year contracts, they can offer a 3% raise in the final year, after the next election.

It's worth noting that while the government says this to elementary and secondary teachers, the government not long ago signed a collective agreement with college teachers for a 3.65% increase. Something seems terribly lopsided here.

What is very interesting, though, is that the Minister of Education's letter warns the boards that if they increase salaries beyond those guidelines, they will be forced to file a public report—a public flogging—detailing where they got every penny. They will also be penalized by not receiving funds designated for teacher development.

The letter offers no relief for boards struggling with inadequate salary benchmarks in the funding formula. Later on, after this letter was sent out, the minister said he was going to put up an additional \$10 million to deal with some cost issues, but that is a fraction of what experts say is needed.

I just want to point out that in its impact, this legislation and the letter that went along with it are going to be very discriminatory to some teachers. I met with some representatives of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association just a few weeks ago. What they pointed out to me is that, overwhelmingly, the teachers who are going to be harmed the most, hurt the most and affected in a very discriminatory way are going to be teachers of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. They are asking: "Can we just bargain? Can we bargain because our boards want to make some arrangements with us to make up for our disadvantaged position? We would like to bargain this." But under a government that said they would never impose time allocation and under a government that said they would not impose collective agreements, they are doing exactly that, and it's got a very discriminatory effect.

I just want to spend the final eight minutes of my time talking about the other embarrassment the government is trying to hide here, the other embarrassment that is at the root of this. You see, before the election, Mr. McGuinty and his education minister, Mr. Kennedy, were heard to say across all of the province that a McGuinty government would fully, properly and adequately fund education, and numbers in excess of a \$1-billion increase to the funding formula were trotted out. That hasn't happened.

In fact, Mr. Kennedy used to speak of the Rozanski report. The Rozanski report was commissioned by the former Conservative government to look at funding of elementary and secondary schools to determine if there was an adequacy of funding with elementary and secondary schools, and that was an exhaustive report. It looked at school busing and school maintenance. It looked at teachers' salaries and school staffing. It looked

at special education, rural schools and urban schools. It looked at English as a second language. It was a very detailed, exhaustive report setting out exactly where education was being underfunded.

Economist Hugh Mackenzie has done an update of the Rozanski benchmark, because you have to factor in inflation and you have to decide where it's at two years later. Looking now at the current McGuinty government and using the Rozanski benchmarks, he concluded that areas are still seriously underfunded. For example, he concludes that foundation teachers' salaries are underfunded to the tune of \$396 million, that foundation non-teachers' salaries are underfunded to the tune of over \$100 million, that foundation benefits are underfunded to the tune of \$196 million; salaries and benefits underfunding totals \$693 million.

Now just to do some quick math, let's round off the \$396 million to \$400 million, \$500 million, \$600 million. There's over \$1.2 billion of underfunding under the McGuinty Liberal government two years into their mandate. They haven't done anything about Rozanski. The underfunding that was there under the Conservatives still exists under the McGuinty government. Despite all those platitudes about adding over a billion dollars in funding to the system, about properly and adequately funding elementary and secondary schools, the underfunding still exists.

I think that's why we're dealing with time allocation tonight, because the more this debate continues, the more the public gets tuned in, the angrier some members of the public become, and it becomes apparent that the government that advertised itself as the education government and the Premier who advertised himself as the education Premier have no clothes. The emperor has no clothes. That's what's really going on here.

Just one example: I remember when Mr. Kennedy was opposition education critic for Mr. McGuinty. He and Mr. McGuinty used to travel the province visiting schools slated to be closed and promising that those schools, many of them in rural areas, would not be closed, promising those rural communities that their school would not be closed, and this is a critical issue. When you have a community of 1,000 people, 500 people and you close their school, you're literally taking the heart out of the community.

I've had some interesting conversations with real estate agents who tell me that trying to sell a home in a community where there is no school is probably one of the hardest things that you can do. People do not want to locate in a community that does not have a community school.

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Mr. Kennedy and Mr. McGuinty travelled from one end of the province to the other end of the province saying that under a McGuinty government those rural schools would not be closed. Well, what's happening? Despite the McGuinty promise to save small schools, they keep closing. They're closing everywhere. Some boards are closing faster than the public can keep count.

For example, the Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay, absent the money to fund small rural schools, absent the money for foundation teacher salaries, for foundation non-teacher salaries, for foundation benefits, for salaries and benefits overall, absent the money for maintenance, absent the money for school operation, has announced that it will close 14 schools over the next two years, many of them small rural schools, where, when you close them, you tear the heart out of the community. You essentially are saying to the community, "That's it. Your days are over." Many of these children are going to spend not 15 minutes on a bus, not half an hour on a bus, not 45 minutes on a bus, but an hour on a bus, in some cases, an hour on a bus on country roads with no lighting, in wintertime, when it's 30 and 40 below and when it gets dark at night at 4 o'clock. This is apparently now progressive policy by the McGuinty government. But I think people in Thunder Bay will remember when Dalton McGuinty and Mr. Kennedy came to them over and over again and said, "If a McGuinty government is elected, these schools won't close." Now what is happening?

Further to that, the McGuinty government said that they were going to reinvest in school transportation, that they were going to ensure that busing and school transportation was adequately funded. But then when we saw their allocation of transportation funds, it's not equitable at all and it's not fair at all. In fact, what's happening is that more than 30 boards of education will lose funds for busing and transportation in the year 2005-06. In the Durham District School Board's case, 600 to 1,000 families will have at least one child being cut from bus service.

Finally, there's one other thing that I think this government wants to avoid, one other piece of embarrassment. When they were in opposition, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. McGuinty used to accuse the former government of trying to micromanage the schools, of trying to run all the schools from an office tower at Queen's Park, of trying to run schools in northwestern Ontario, northeastern Ontario, rural Ontario, Windsor and downtown Toronto all from central direction. Well, what do we see in this bill and what do we see in the letter from the Minister of Education? Micromanaging worse than the Conservatives. That's why we're here tonight and that's why this is being time-allocated: because the McGuinty government is being embarrassed by their broken promises once again.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Thank you, Speaker, and welcome to the Chair.

What are we here to debate tonight? We're debating a motion on time allocation of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act. First of all, I'd like to deal with the time allocation. We've heard a lot of holier-than-thou statements about how awful it is that we're doing time allocation. I'd like to tell you what the then NDP Minister of Natural Resources, now leader of the third party, had to say during an NDP debate when they brought in time allocation: "I would like to speak in support of the

government's motion that asks this House to set time allocation for third reading of Bill 171." Then of course we have the Conservatives, who had time allocation so often that everybody lost count; we don't even need to check the record there, it was so appalling. So much for the holier-than-thou act.

Bill 167: What does it really do? It's a very simple bill and what it requires is that collective agreements in the school board sector with teachers be for either two years or four years. The accusation is that this is so we can somehow micromanage the system and avoid labour unrest during the next election campaign.

Now, let me tell you something. I've done a lot of school board collective bargaining, and if you choose to have a two-year collective agreement it will expire at the end of August 2006. Any union negotiator worth their salt can take a collective agreement that expires in August 2006 and arrange to have a work-to-rule or a strike in June 2007 or September 2007. If you doubt my words, the current collective agreements all expired in August 2004 and now, in spring 2005, things are starting to heat up. So you can disabuse yourself of the notion that this is all about avoiding labour unrest during the next election.

What's it really about? Let's talk about school board collective bargaining, which is something I did for a very long time. Back when school boards used to have taxation power and boards and teachers were really doing free, unfettered bargaining, the natural pattern of things was that school boards and teachers reached multi-year collective agreements—multi-year. Why did they do that? For two reasons, basically. First, it provided stability in the system. You got a multi-year agreement, and then you could go away and you weren't going to have to go through this again. Collective bargaining is stressful, and people don't like stress. In particular, they don't like stress in schools, where we have a lot of little kiddies. So multi-year agreements provide stability. Secondly, they allow the parties, both the boards and the teachers, to focus on positive things like making sure that little kids learn. That's why boards and teachers, left to their own devices, did multi-year agreements.

What happened? The Conservatives came in and took over the funding system, so there was no longer free funding but one-year funding of the system. What happened was that we ended up with one-year collective agreements, and that led to instability in the system and a lack of focus on things we wanted to focus on—i.e., educating little kids—and instead, a focus on the incessant education wars. Having lived through that, I can tell you it was not pleasant and is one of the major reasons I am standing where I am standing here today.

Even the Tories figured out that this really wasn't working, so they brought in an act that said you have to have three-year collective agreements. Their wording was inept and it didn't really work, because people like me, who were bargaining, found out ways to get around it and keep on doing one-year agreements. And why did boards and teachers keep doing one-year collective

agreements even though the legislation nominally said, "You have to do three"? Ignore Mr. Runciman's remarks about, "We don't want to restrict their freedom to choose how they bargain." The Tories tried; they just didn't get it right.

The reason it didn't work and that people looked for escape clauses was three-fold. First of all was the fact that there was chronic underfunding of the education system. We identified a \$1-billion gap in funding, which was eventually confirmed by Dr. Rozanski, and in the face of chronic underfunding, boards were unwilling to strike multi-year collective agreements.

Secondly, and specifically, there was the problem of something called the salary benchmarks. The funding for salaries in the funding model totally underestimated the true cost of salaries. That meant that in this new regime, where the province funds the collective agreement but somebody else negotiates it, the money that was set to fund salaries was woefully underestimated.

Finally, there was a lack of a long-term funding commitment. If you want people to negotiate multi-year agreements, you have to tell them what funding they're going to get for multi-years, and the Tories refused to do that.

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It might come as a surprise to Mr. Klees, who keeps on making motions about how it's a terrible thing that the minister would suggest multi-year funding, but in fact the Conservatives tried to do something slightly similar. There was a certain Minister of Labour who at one point sat in the chair in which you are now sitting, Mr. Speaker, who one day convened some phone calls. First of all, he called up all the management-side people on a conference call—that would include me—and said, "I'm going to tell you what it is you're going to negotiate for the next three years." He laid out a percentage for the first year, a percentage for the second year and a percentage for the third year.

Do you know what we asked him? We said, "Well, are you going to guarantee that you will provide the funding and the salary benchmarks to support that?" And do you know what he said? "No, but that's what we want you to bargain." Who is going to bargain long-term collective agreements absent the funding?

So what's different about what we are proposing? First of all, we are giving boards some flexibility. Yes, we want them to have long-term agreements, because that provides stability, but we are giving them some choice between two years and four years. But more importantly, we are addressing the long-term, chronic underfunding. In fact, contrary to what you have been told, 80% of Dr. Rozanski's recommendations have been addressed this year, and by the end of next year we are on track to have 100% of those recommendations addressed. We are addressing the chronic underfunding.

Secondly and specifically, money has been put aside to address the salary benchmark problem. We are adjusting the salary benchmarks so that they reflect the real

salaries boards are providing and not some mythical salary that the Tories pulled out of the air.

Thirdly, we are committing to long-term funding. That's what this letter from the minister is about. It tells the boards what it is that we're committing to in terms of long-term funding. The minister has said that the salary benchmarks will be increased by 2% in 2004-05—already done—2% in 2005-06, 2.5% in 2006-07 and 3% in 2007-08. The minister is not bargaining. The only thing the minister can do is commit to the funding level.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Durham, if you are going to heckle, you should at least be in your seat.

Mrs. Sandals: He's changing seats.

Let me reiterate that the only thing the minister can do is commit to the level of funding. It is then up to the boards and the teachers to negotiate the salary levels within the way the law is structured. Minister, we need to get on with this; the parties are negotiating, and they need to know what the law says. I support this allocation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to join the debate tonight on the time allocation motion on Bill 167. We've heard, time and time again, from the previous opposition parties and their candidates in the past election, how they decried the use of time allocation, how wrong it was. I heard how the leader of the third party quoted the now Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, on what he had to say about the use of time allocation and how he found it disgraceful and distasteful and wrong in this House. Yet, on his bill here now, that's exactly what we get: a time allocation motion.

We get this sanctimonious drivel from the Liberals about how we've got to move on with this because it's the right thing to do. They want to talk about how the previous party, the Conservative Party, used time allocation, or how the NDP used time allocation. In the first 18 months of this government, they have used time allocation many more times than the previous government did in their first 18 months, and you can check the record on that. So they're off to quite a start for a party that said, "We oppose this. It's wrong." They campaigned on it, and here they are, bringing in time allocation motions at a rate never before seen in this House.

You know, it used to be first reading, second reading debate, vote on second reading, off to committee, time for some sober second thought, time for some people who really have some interest and some stakeholders to have an opportunity to make comment and to have involvement in maybe making some sensible amendments to a bill. Then you come back for third reading debate and the bill passes in its amended form. The new Liberal way is first reading, second reading, time allocation; good night, nurse. And we roll that all up together and package it in a beautiful democratic renewal blanket—you know, a little baby blanket. Democratic renewal: Here's the baby, delivered by Michael Bryant: democratic renewal. This is what we get: time allocation.

Well, I'll tell you, I can stand here in this House and say that I have never supported or voted for a time allocation motion, and I don't believe that any member of the government side can say that—

Interjections.

Mr. Yakubuski: Never, not once. If I could have some more of that water, Jason, that you're passing out. Thank you very much.

Earlier on, the member from Niagara Centre spoke very eloquently about his sadness with the way that this government is behaving, and I tend to agree with him. He predicted that the numbers would shift very dramatically October 4, 2007, or some day after that, depending on whether the Premier has his courage that day. I do suspect that will be one promise that the Premier will keep, because when he does go to campaign, he wants to be able to go to the people and say, "Look, we kept the promise." They'll say, "What promise was that, Mr. McGuinty?" "Well, we promised we'd have the election on October 4, and here it is." "Oh, yes, you did keep a promise. Boy, and we thought you couldn't keep any promises." Well, they'll have broken every other one, and at a rate that would make your head spin. They just don't believe in keeping promises, but I think they're going to keep that one.

Before I get too far off the track, I want to talk about something in my riding. They talked about school closures and how they want to get stable funding to keep schools open. Well, there was a meeting that was supposed to go on tonight in my riding to discuss the potential closure of seven schools. The meeting didn't go because of a terrible snowstorm up in my riding, but it is rescheduled. These will be the first closures in the public board in Renfrew county since 1993. So that's what this government's great support for rural schools is all about: "Sure, we support you. We're going to close you. That's how we support you." That's the kind of funding model that they've got in place for rural schools in my riding.

I want to talk about the Barry's Bay Bantam Grizzlies hockey team. They were in a tournament yesterday, and it was interesting, because they defeated a team from Nepean, my colleague from Nepean-Carleton, John Baird's riding. Then they went on to defeat a team from Carleton Place, in my colleague Norm Sterling's riding. Then, in the finals, they defeated a team from South Grenville, in my colleague in my colleague Bob Runciman's riding. So it was quite a day. I was wondering why maybe some of my colleagues weren't their normal, jovial selves with me today; I guess they may have gotten that news.

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I want to congratulate the team, because they entered six tournaments this year—it's a bantam house league team—and in every tournament, they went to the A championship, and they won three of them. I want to congratulate the members of the team: Adam Bloskie; Travis Brodofski; Willy Budarick; Brandon Dombroskie, the goaltender; Sean Kaufeldt; Josh O'Connor; Stephen Pecoskie; Nicholas Pecoskie; Sebastien Recoskie; and my son, Lucas Yakubuski. They also had—

Interjection: Are they all related to you? They all end with “s-k-i.”

Mr. Yakabuski: No, Josh O'Connor—no “s-k-i” there.

They also have three affiliates that they use from time to time: Nick Jessup, Nolan Dombroskie and Francis Pecoskie.

I want to give a whole lot of credit to Eugene Bloskie, the head coach; Brian Pecoskie, the assistant coach and trainer; and Nick Dombroskie, the trainer. I'll tell you, they've got these boys percolating this year like never before. I want to give them a great deal of credit for doing such a great job on Base Petawawa yesterday, winning that tournament in such a dramatic fashion. And they were overmanned in every game: Nine skaters is what they've got, nine skaters playing against the Nepean team, for example, that had 17 skaters. But the boys played well, and it was tremendous. I was able to see the final game yesterday at about 4 o'clock, and it was great stuff.

Mr. Dunlop: You've got about a minute left.

Mr. Yakabuski: A minute?

I do want to get back to the time allocation motion. As I've said, I have never stood and supported a time allocation motion. I'm on the same page as the member for Niagara Centre here. I won't be supporting this one either. I did hear him say that he was going to vote against it, and I'm going to be in the same corner with him on that one.

I will not be supporting that motion, because I think it is quite sad—quite sad—that this party ran on a platform that has been totally washed away like the tide, just washed away. Everything that was a Liberal promise: “Just forget about it, folks. You know we didn't mean that. We had to get elected. We could never get elected telling you what we really believe and what we were really planning to do. So we had to sell you a bill of goods, get ourselves elected, and now we're hoping against hope that somehow in four years you're going to forget all about what we did and didn't do.” As the member for Niagara Centre said, they're not going to be forgetting about it.

I want to talk about the farmers, too, a little bit.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): No, it's time.

Mr. Yakabuski: OK. They're going to be visiting here again on Wednesday, and they've got a lot of concerns. This government is not doing enough for farmers and is doing nothing for rural Ontario. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been told that my time is up.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): Thank you, Speaker. Congratulations on your appointment to the Chair.

I'm happy to join in the debate tonight. I want to start by commending the Minister of Education for bringing back peace and stability to our schools after years of war and casualties. Yes, very heavy casualties, and guess who suffered? Of course, it's the students and the parents.

I think it really goes without saying that it's absolutely essential to have the type of stability that Bill 167 aims to

achieve in order for our students to be able to learn well and to achieve the results that we want them to achieve. It is really a fact that this approach means that schools and boards can better plan for costs, because it's only when you have a longer term in terms of planning that you can start to focus on these projects and these initiatives that would take at least three or four years to implement.

I want to talk about something extremely important, and that is genuine partnership. It's important to have very genuine partnership within our educational community, because I know that this is happening in the last year and a half. I've been to a number of schools in my riding. I've been to the 50th anniversary of the Markham District High School, as well as to a number of events with respect to Asian Heritage Month in May of last year and the Chinese New Year just a couple of months ago.

I went to Parkland Public School in Markham, and this is a special school that's very dear to my heart because that's the school that my daughter Daphne went to. Daphne is now in grade 11. I went to Parkland Public School a couple of months ago for the very first time that they organized a celebration for Chinese New Year. They did an excellent job and the teachers were very enthusiastic about the event. But it's really mind-boggling that this school has been around for many years.

Of course, when they were fighting with the former government, they just did not have the heart to do anything of that sort. And that is my point. It really is showing in a big way that teachers now feel a lot better and that is why they can contribute better. They are in an extremely enthusiastic and upbeat mood to organize these extracurricular events, and that is why a genuine partnership is of the essence.

I want to also say that this is not only a bill in and of itself, when we talk about what we're trying to do in our education system; it is a package. It is a package because there are many provincial initiatives. I'll just give you an example of benchmarks for funding salaries. Not only have we made changes in benchmarking, but we've also put in \$10 million to supplement the increase in salary just with respect to the benchmarks that were announced earlier this year.

Another aspect is that we've made investments to support students and teachers for the 2004-05 school year, including \$19 million as a first step in reducing primary class size. I want to give you some examples as to what this could do and what this has done. Look at the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board. They received about \$1.2 million and the board has hired 18 teachers. One of the Catholic schools has reduced class size in grade 2 from 28 to 19. Another example: Peel District School Board received \$6.7 million and the board hired about 84 teachers. A school has reduced the kindergarten class size from 29 to 22. That is significant. With the Halton District School Board, which received slightly over \$2 million, one of the schools had their grade 3 class size cut from 28 to 18. Of course, there are

many more examples, but I don't have time to read them all.

I now want to talk about another important aspect, which is achievement and success. This is extremely important because students can only have achievement and success without disruption, and what they got in the former government's years is exactly that disruption. I have talked about how devastating this is, especially to new immigrants, but I want to maybe say a bit more. When people come to this country from a different culture, oftentimes their children are not conversant in English and they don't know about a lot of the subject matter, although they're not unintelligent. They're very intelligent school kids; it's just that they're not used to this new system and they need the time, they need the patience of the teachers to teach them so that they can learn well.

A lot of the parents who suffered through the disruptions through the former Tory years said to me, "Tony, what is wrong with this country? Why is it that the schools were closed for so many days and we had to somehow take care of our kids?" They found it very difficult to take care of their kids because many of them had to work. So they had to take time off and then their kids would have to stop learning, and this is extremely devastating. I told them, "There's nothing wrong with this country;" there was something very seriously wrong with the then provincial government, because they took a confrontational approach. They wanted to pit one group against another. They wanted to blame it on the teachers, and therefore they could get the parents' votes. But no, people are not that stupid. They saw right through that and that is why we are where we are today and they are where they are today.

I think we all understand that it is really of paramount importance that we have our students go through extremely intensive training to be internationally competitive. We all know that this is the information age and that skills are extremely important. We've all heard about low-paying jobs going to China and India, and this will happen whether we like it or not. The key, of course, is for us to train our students so that they can become highly skilled to continue doing those high-paying jobs. This can only be done by a total lack of disruption and an extremely peaceful environment.

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We all understand that when serious damage has been done to our system, we need to repair it, and I want to give you some facts.

We know that under the Tories, Ontario's kids lost 25 million school days, and this is intolerable. We also know that a government-commissioned study on the performance of high school students by Dr. Alan King of Queen's University estimates that close to 30%—30%, which is close to 50,000 high school students—are at risk of not graduating from high school. We add that to another fact: that the unemployment rate for 15- to 24-year-olds who don't have a high school diploma is 22%, which is a lot higher than the 15% unemployment rate of

high school graduates. That's why we understand that high school graduation is so important; education is so important.

There's good news on the way now. The good news is that our government has invested more than \$18 million in 100 innovative projects in school boards across the province. Another fact is that, even when faced with a deficit, our government is proposing to increase salary benchmarks, as my colleague indicated earlier, by 2%, 2%, 2.5% and 3% for the next four years in a four-year contract.

Another fact—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask that the doors be closed and the question be called and that division be allowed with no bell, so that it would be held just with those members in the House right now.

The Acting Speaker: I don't believe that is a point of order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: You're not on the floor.

Mr. Baird: I'm asking for unanimous consent, for agreement that that take place.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no. Please continue.

Mr. Wong: Another fact is that more than 7,500 elementary teachers are beginning the year with specialized training in reading and math instruction as part of the government's effort to boost student literacy and numeracy in all important early grades. Another fact: More than 1,300 schools have smaller classes in the primary grades. I can go on and on.

I do not accept a confrontation, and I am going to vote for student success and achievement. I'm going to vote for genuine partnership.

Mrs. Munro: Thank you for allowing me to take the next few minutes to speak about the time allocation motion we are debating here this evening.

Looking at the bill that we're looking at time-allocating requires a little bit of explanation because the key to the bill is extending the time of teacher contracts from three to four years. It does allow for other possible variations, but the main thrust of the bill is to be able to provide four-year contracts. While it might seem somewhat innocuous to think in terms of only going from three to four years, one might question what the difference is. There are a couple of things that I think are important to understand in moving from one to the other.

One of the things at the heart of this in terms of questions regarding this bill is how it's going to be paid for. Normally, government is looking at budgeting on an annual planning process, and it's rather interesting to look at what happens when the possibility of a four-year contract is laid out. In the first year, the government has suggested a 2% increase, which would be the equivalent of \$238 million. Year two would be another 2% on top of that, which would cost \$480.76 million; year three, another 2.5%, which would equal \$790.279 million; and year four, another 3%, which is \$1.171 billion.

So you can see from this the kind of cost that is being laid out for us in looking at this particular bill. I think that it demonstrates a concern that we can see in other initiatives by the government, where, by laying out a scheme of payment or support for a particular initiative, the government is essentially handcuffing itself and any future government in terms of the ability to provide any kind of fiscal planning when you've allocated monies in this manner.

It also speaks to another issue, and that is the question of the historical role of the school boards. Historically, of course, the boards have hired. They have negotiated their own contracts with local negotiating teams. They've had the influence of what's happening across the province, but they've also been in the position of being able to negotiate on local issues. None of those things are possible with this kind of bill.

The minister has referred to the importance of this bill as bringing stability and peace to the education system, but there are a number of partners who don't quite see that. The OSSTF has referred to the fact that it demonstrates an unfair labour practice. They have been clear about that criticism. The Elementary Teachers' Federation has looked at the kind of reaction amongst their members, where there has been a 96% vote in favour of a strike.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: First, I want to apologize to my colleague the member for York region, who's giving a wonderful speech. I have a huge amount of respect for the member for York region.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent—I have it in writing, and I'll send it over to you. Could I get an usher over here? It is Jesse, my favourite usher.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: From the great riding of Don Valley East.

Mr. Baird: From the great riding of Don Valley East. Is that true?

Mrs. Mitchell: Page.

Mr. Baird: Usher. She's not a page. Pages are in grade 8. She has actually been known as a student usher leader on various occasions. Is that all right, Jesse? Carol, you should apologize and resign.

Mrs. Mitchell: I do.

Mr. Baird: I would like to ask for unanimous consent:

- (1) That the doors be tiled;
- (2) That the question be called;
- (3) That division bells be limited to one moment; and
- (4) That a recorded vote be held forthwith.

The Acting Speaker: We have a motion seeking unanimous consent—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker: Dispense.

Is it agreed? I heard a no.

The member from York North can resume the floor.

Mrs. Munro: As I was suggesting, there has certainly been some criticism of this initiative, and I think that people need to understand some of the issues that are implied here.

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I also want to take the couple of minutes that I have remaining on the fact that this bill is another example of the kind of centralizing of power that we are seeing at Queen's Park with a variety of bills being put forward by this government. It's something that people need to understand when you start looking at all these different initiatives across various ministries, all of which tend to centralize power at Queen's Park.

During the election, the Liberals had promised that they would look at the Ontario Municipal Board, for instance, as something they felt took away from the power of local municipal governments. With the introduction of the new Planning Act, in fact what we saw was a significant departure, not just the question of changing the power of the Ontario Municipal Board, but in fact bringing that power to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He is able to declare a provincial interest, and then inject himself into the process that would normally be carried out by the Ontario Municipal Board. He's able to do that without a public forum, without a public disposition of reasons. It could be a personal decision that he is just going to inject himself into that.

When we look at bills like the greenbelt, we have a bill that has no appeal process. Again, the only way to make any changes is through the power of the minister himself. And again, when we look at Bill 136—the bill dealing with growth—we are looking at the same thing: the power of the minister.

You might wonder that I have chosen examples from one particular ministry, but we can look at other areas as well: We have a Minister of Education who is now an arbiter on junk food; we have a regulation that deals with how hot your water heater can be. This bill falls into the same area that these others do, and that is the concentration of power that we are looking at. Time allocation means that there are no committee hearings, that it is just steamrolled through. I think it's important to see it in the context of some very significant centralizations of power that fundamentally are anti-democratic. This fits into that description.

Mr. Baird: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I ask for unanimous consent:

- (1) That the doors be tiled;
- (2) That the question be called;
- (3) That division bells be limited to one moment; and
- (4) That a recorded vote be held forthwith.

The Acting Speaker: First of all, I'm not sure of the clarity of the motion. What does "ring the bells for one moment" mean?

Mr. Baird: At your good discretion, sir.

The Acting Speaker: Well, is it like 15 seconds? All right. We have a motion for unanimous consent. Is it agreed? I heard a no.

Further debate.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): Wait till John Tory gets here; he'll straighten you guys out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment to the Chair.

It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 167 and the time allocation motion this evening. Certainly I have no problem supporting both the bill and the time allocation motion this evening. This means peace and stability in education, and we are trying to move forward with that peace and stability in education. I guess the opposition parties are not interested in peace and stability in education; we have seen ample evidence of that in the past, and in fact I heard the member from Beaches–East York just last week, as well as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, say that the discussion and lengthy, protracted debate with respect to Bill 167 is simply a waste of time, that we need to move on and discuss other issues such as health care and the like. And here we are today hearing opposition members stand up, opposed to this—for whatever reason, I'm not quite sure.

The residents in my community, in Sault Ste. Marie, in 2007 when I go to their door and they say to me, "We're happy with the things that have happened in the riding over the last four years, we're happy with the reinvestment in health care, with the \$2 million for the new CT scanner, the reinvestments in home care and long-term care, the investments in education, smaller class sizes, improved test scores, fixing our schools, raising the minimum wage, ending the 60-hour workweek"—all the commitments that we made and are moving forward on. I doubt very much I'm going to hear a resident in my community say, "We'd like to vote for you, Mr. Orazietti, but that time allocation motion seemed to get in the way of all the good things," in terms of our agenda that we have been able to accomplish over the past four years.

I have no hesitation in moving forward with this particular motion as well as moving forward with our bill, Bill 167, because I support peace and stability in education. I know that's something that is difficult for the opposition members to grasp, given their history with respect to the education sector.

Overall, our agenda on education is fairly clear. We're going to work collaboratively with our education partners—parents, students trustees and the like—to create open participation and development of strategies to improve our education system, one that has been sorely lacking in this province. We are going to work very hard to rebuild the trust in the education system with our education workers.

I want to commend Minister Kennedy for his work to date with respect to the education sector and the many meetings and hours that he has put in meeting with parent groups, teachers, education workers, administrators, trustees and the like to rebuild that trust in the education sector, because it has been something that has been beaten up and abused over the past decade or more. It's something that I think the people in this province respect and admire with regard to our policies in education. So I want to commend the minister for his effort in this regard, because I think he has made incredible strides in rebuilding that trust.

Our Premier's commitment toward education has been unequivocal: to reinvest in education and to make education one of the cornerstones of our government's policies in terms of moving forward here. We know there is going to be an incredible strain on the health care system in the coming years, and we need each person in this province to reach their maximum potential. So I fully support the Premier's direction with respect to reinvesting in our education institutions and in the people of this province, our future, the young people of Ontario.

Just to spend a few brief moments recounting some of the past experiences in the education sector, I have spent 10 years in education myself. I became a new teacher in 1993 and began in the education system under the NDP government at the time and lived through that social contract. For a government that was out there professing to be the party of labour, the party to be the friend of public services in the province, at the first opportunity they turned their back on labour and they ripped up our collective agreements. That's the kind of vision that they had for education in Ontario. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but as one of those individuals who had my contract ripped up, on behalf of those hundreds of thousands of teachers in the province of Ontario, it was a shame.

Then we had a government that came into office with an education minister, Minister John Snobelen, who said, "We are going to create a crisis in education," and that tape just plays and plays. You talk about betraying the trust of Ontarians and undermining the relationship in the education sector—when you have those kinds of comments from someone who is entrusted to lead the province, to protect the young people in our province to ensure they have the best education possible and to ensure they are going to reach their potential, having a Minister of Education come in and say, "We are going to create a crisis," is disgraceful.

Interjections.

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Mr. Orazietti: I know the opposition members don't want to hear this, but you're going to have to take your medicine here.

The private school tax credit: another example of sucking money out of the public system; a commitment that we made in the election campaign to eliminate, and that was eliminated.

Taking over boards of education: That's not the kind of relationship that we're building with our education partners. I recall the past government taking over Ottawa, Hamilton and Toronto.

The PLP: one of the most punitive pieces of legislation introduced to teachers. That was something that failed miserably in terms of its objective and in terms of professional development, and we're going to be working with our teachers in this province to rebuild their trust as well as to improve the professional learning programs.

Interjections.

Mr. Orazietti: I think we're hitting a couple of nerves here. That's unfortunate because that's the kind of crisis

that was created in education by the past government. You're not going to see our Minister of Education ripping up the collective agreements of thousands of teachers, and you're not going to see the Minister of Education in our government saying that he's going to create a crisis in education. Mr. Kennedy will not be ripping up the education contracts of thousands of teachers.

Let's talk about some of the improvements: \$1.1 billion in new funding in education since we've become government. Mordechai Rozanski completed his study and indicated that \$1.8 billion in new funding was required to sustain the education system in the province of Ontario. We are achieving those goals. We are in fact going to exceed Rozanski's recommendations: \$90 million to reduce class sizes, \$160 million to help the students who need it most, and \$280 million for school renewal, which will leverage \$4 billion in school renovations and renewals. Because it's time boards had to stop making choices between whether or not they are going to buy students—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. I think the member from Nepean—Carleton should withdraw the statement.

Mr. Baird: If I said that, I withdraw it.

The Acting Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Oraziotti: I think it's fairly clear that the kind of investments that we're making in education are going to go a long way in improving the success rates of our young people, which is our overall objective. We're going to increase the percentage of young people who graduate from our schools, achieve a high school diploma and are able to go on and reach their potential, whether it be in a skilled trades area, a profession or the world of work.

I am very proud of our government's achievements to date. We are rebuilding trust with the education sector. I encourage all members to support Bill 167. I think this is a great opportunity in the coming years to actually see those investments put to good work.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this evening and talk a little bit about time allocation and democratic renewal. It's interesting that we would have a time allocation motion to end debate on second reading and no third reading debate whatsoever, on a day when the minister for democratic renewal brought in a piece of legislation. It has to be embarrassing to the government to treat this assembly this way.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Minister and the member from Nepean—Carleton, please. The member from Simcoe North has the floor.

Mr. Baird: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I want to apologize for heckling and will accede to your good judgment, sir.

Mr. Dunlop: As I said, it's becoming the norm for this government. Even in this very short winter span, we've seen a time allocation motion, completely not necessary, on this piece of legislation. There's no reason that we couldn't proceed on March 29, after the two-week break, and have third reading debate and maybe

some committee meetings. What is the rush on this piece of legislation? Why are we time-allocating this and trying to complete this bill during this small winter session? It's difficult for me to believe, especially for a government that bragged that they would never have time allocation and that it would be a thing of the past.

I'd like to speak for a second about Rozanski and the Rozanski report. I've heard a lot of numbers being floated around here tonight. They talk about fully implementing the Rozanski recommendations. If I can remember correctly—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Nepean—Carleton, this isn't the first time, but I'm going to warn you that if there is a further outburst, we'll have you removed.

Mr. Dunlop: The Rozanski recommendations were to be implemented over a three-year period. If I remember correctly, Premier Eves and the education minister took steps immediately after the Rozanski recommendations came out in the fall of 2002 and immediately implemented \$900 million, I believe, with the balance to be implemented over a two-year period. Now I'm hearing that the money will still not be implemented even in this year.

I heard the member—I believe he is from Sault Ste. Marie—talk about a bunch of the investments that the government had made. I would like to ask the government members here tonight, what happened to the TERI funding? That's the technical education reinvestment in industry. That money was to flow—\$90 million. The first amount of money flowed in 2002-03, and the balance—I know a number of the boards today are asking for about \$22 million for this fiscal year, which ends in another two weeks. I'm curious where the money is. I have had a number of technical education teachers phoning my office and asking me, "Where is the money?" It's a commitment from the government; it's for technical education.

We're talking about a year when the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is expecting an investment in education, and here we have, right in our high schools, money that was allocated by the previous government and that this new government committed to. Now we're asking for the funding to be forwarded, and we haven't seen it. Again, there are only three weeks left in this year. I would be very disappointed if the government did not flow money into technical education in our secondary schools. What I'm seeing and what I'm hearing is that the money is not flowing this year and that basically the government has given up on this. They're making another bunch of fancy reannouncements, but the money for technical education is not flowing. I'd like to see the government make that commitment and flow that money before the end of the year, because the schools need to actually purchase the equipment before the end of June.

I've got a couple of minutes, and I'd like to say something about another closure, not time allocation this

time. It's about the Huronia Regional Centre in my riding of Simcoe North. You've been hearing the petitions being read here all week and for the last couple of weeks. This is a terrible disaster, as far as I'm concerned, in the province of Ontario. There are 680 people employed in the Huronia Regional Centre. They represent a payroll of \$29 million to the Orillia area. There are also 351 clients who are very, very severely handicapped and disadvantaged. The government, under the Minister of Community and Social Services—without consultation with the parents, by the way; she has not attended a meeting yet; she's never visited the site—is planning on closing this facility. The first people apparently will move as early as July, August and September of this year. We're asking the minister to reconsider this decision. We think that the previous ministers did not make the decision to close it because we are talking about the most severely challenged people in the province. They're represented here in the Huronia Regional Centre, in the Southwestern Regional Centre and in the Rideau Regional Centre up in Smiths Falls.

I wanted to put that on the record. It's a terrible disaster for our area.

Mr. O'Toole: It is sad.

Mr. Dunlop: But what's even sadder, as the member from Durham is saying behind me, is that there hasn't been a consultation with the parents. The minister has met with a couple of parents here at Queen's Park, but the parents she has met with have not represented the bulk of the people. That's why we keep reading petition after petition into the record, because we want the Ministry of Community and Social Services—we don't know if the minister is actually running the ministry or not, but we want that ministry to take a second look at these regional centres across the province, because suddenly they believe that the community living organizations can look after these folks like the folks they have in the community living facilities today. I don't think that's possible. I'm no expert in this area, but I can tell you, I've talked to a lot of people from the medical community, a lot of people in our community and a lot of the people who work at the Huronia Regional Centre. Although they're afraid to speak out against the minister because they're afraid of losing their jobs prematurely, we have a terrible disaster on our hands.

2120

I wanted to put that on the record tonight. I'm hoping the minister will reconsider this; I hope the ministry will reconsider it. I think there should be at least 1,000 beds left in the province of Ontario to look after the most severely challenged people in our society. They are very disadvantaged, and they need a lot of medical attention, a lot of medical treatment, a lot of supervision and a lot of care. It's something that their parents cannot look after very easily.

With that, I believe that the member from Nepean—Carleton would like to say a few words. I've got about a minute left to give him, so I'll pass it over to my colleague. Again, Mr. Speaker, I thank you so much for this

opportunity to say a few words on this time allocation motion.

Mr. Baird: Because of the comment of the member from Sault Ste. Marie, I move that an amendment be forwarded that line 11 of the time allocation motion be amended from "10 minutes" to a 43-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Baird has moved that, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 43 minutes. Is there unanimous consent?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry, the floor is back to Mr. Baird.

Mr. Baird: I would like to move an amendment to the amendment, that "any proceedings" be amended to "all proceedings."

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Baird has moved—I hope I've got the right one—that, in the case of any division relating to all proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes. That's what he has moved.

The time for debate has expired, so I'm going to first call the question on the amendment to the amendment, which is that, in the case of any division relating to all proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. Baird: To 43 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: No, it's to 10 minutes. It's the amendment to the amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The main motion—

Mr. O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: We are in the middle of a vote. What is your point of order?

Mr. O'Toole: The question before the members is that we extend the time for the bells. Is that it?

The Acting Speaker: That's it. The next one is the 43 minutes. I'm just looking for it.

Mr. O'Toole: Is that motion debatable?

The Acting Speaker: No, there's no debate. The time for debate is over.

The amendment, as amended, will read "that, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 43 minutes."

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. The motion is defeated.

On the main motion, moved by Mr. Caplan, motion 317: Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I heard a "nay."

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 2124 to 2134.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved government motion 317. All in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bountrogianni, Marie
 Brown, Michael A.
 Caplan, David
 Colle, Mike
 Cordiano, Joseph
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob
 Dhillon, Vic
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Duguid, Brad
 Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Hoy, Pat
 Kennedy, Gerard
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Leal, Jeff
 Marsales, Judy
 McNeely, Phil
 Milloy, John
 Mitchell, Carol
 Oraziotti, David

Ramal, Khalil
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sandals, Liz
 Smith, Monique
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Wilkinson, John
 Wong, Tony C.
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Baird, John R.
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Kormos, Peter

Munro, Julia
 O'Toole, John
 Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
 Scott, Laurie
 Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 9.

The Acting Speaker: The ayes being 34 and the nays being 9, I declare the motion carried.

It now being past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2136.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		Milloy, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands /	
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)		
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Kitchener Centre /	
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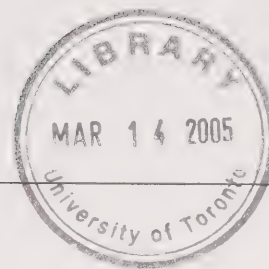
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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 8 March 2005

Mardi 8 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Fabry patients have been abandoned by the Minister of Health and by the McGuinty government. By refusing to fund enzyme replacement therapy, premature death is a certainty for Rick, Sabrina, Danielle, and Fred Sgroi of Richmond Hill, Julia Strauss of Kitchener, Bill Taylor and Carolyn Auger of Ottawa and some 20 other Fabry patients who depend on this treatment to survive.

The minister and this government have heard appeals from patients, their families and members of this Legislature to fund enzyme replacement therapy, and the minister and the Premier have turned their backs on those appeals. The minister hides behind the shield of the Common Drug Review process and deflects making a life-saving decision to the expert drug advisory council. This response by the minister is irresponsible, intellectually dishonest and immoral.

The minister knows that the Common Drug Review was never intended to make decisions about rare and orphan diseases. It recommends drugs for inclusion in provincial drug formularies based on cost-effectiveness. By relying on the opinion of this panel and the expert drug advisory council, this government is basing the decision to save lives on economics rather than patient need. That is offensive to every citizen of this province.

On behalf of Fabry patients and their families, I call on the minister to exercise his authority and his responsibility to extend enzyme replacement therapy today. It is a lifeline that these patients need and they deserve as citizens of Ontario.

HIGHWAY 3

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I rise today to bring to the Minister of Transportation's attention the urgent need to get on with safety improvements and the planned four-laning of Highway 3 in my riding. This stretch of highway is increasingly becoming known as a deadly one, with two head-on collisions occurring just last month within days of one another. Over the years, countless people have been injured or even killed while the former government made promises to my constituents that it did not deliver.

I've been pressing the issue of Highway 3 safety improvements with governments of the day for over seven years now. While I realize there are many important projects to be completed, it's imperative that the four-laning of Highway 3 be a priority. This project has been in the works for far too long and has been plagued by unacceptable delays and postponements that need to be addressed immediately.

Seven years of waiting is enough. The 24,000 drivers who travel this highway every day need assurance that our government takes the issue of their safety seriously and that, unlike the former government, we are serious about the four-laning of Highway 3.

I urge the minister to ensure that further studies and information sessions be completed as soon as possible so that improvements to Highway 3 can be added to the minister's capital construction projects before another of my constituents is injured on this dangerous stretch of road.

FARMERS AND RURAL ONTARIO

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise again today in an effort to try to get this government to listen to the voices of farmers and rural communities, from my riding and from across Ontario.

Last week, farmers rallied on the lawn of Queen's Park, and tomorrow, farmers and rural citizens will be rallying on the lawn of Queen's Park again. This is because the government is not listening to them. There is a rural revolution happening in Ontario. It is coming because you are not listening to the voices of farmers and you are not listening to the voices of rural Ontario. Your policies and inaction have been hurting rural communities and farmers. They have been hurting local communities, and hurting our community halls and our churches.

Over the past several months, I've been meeting with farmers throughout Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, and they have told me that without a doubt the CAIS program is not working. They are not getting the money they need to put seed into the ground or to keep their farms viable.

I want to urge you to respond to the plight of the hard-working farmers. They have told you what they need to survive. You have made promises to farmers and rural Ontarians, but now that you're in charge you're ignoring them. We hope there is money coming for our farmers. So far, this government has ignored their plight. I hope they will listen, and I hope they will act.

And if there is any financial assistance coming to farmers, do not use the CAIS program to distribute it.

Make sure the money goes directly to the farmers who need it. The CAIS program is not working. Money needs to get into the hands of farmers and farm families now, before they lose their farms and before we all lose the safe, secure access to food that they provide.

DEB PELITI

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Today is International Women's Day all over the world, and we are honouring women in this country and in every country that makes up the face of this planet.

Today, I'd like to speak about one woman whom this Legislature honoured last December. That is a woman named Deb Peliti. You will all remember her, because everyone on this floor gave her a standing ovation. She is the woman who found \$40,000 and turned it in to the bank. She is the woman who was on welfare. She is the woman who, with her two children, has a very hard time making ends meet.

This Legislature chose, and rightly so, to give her a standing ovation for her integrity. You now have a chance, especially the members opposite, to have some integrity of your own. You let her keep the reward money. You let her keep the \$2,000. But every single month since then, you have chosen to claw back the child tax credit from her: \$227 every single month. In that period you have clawed back \$700 of the \$2,000 you let her keep, and in the next eight months you will have succeeded in clawing it all back.

You should honour her instead by giving her and the 55,000 other female heads of households an opportunity to keep the child tax credit, and you should eliminate your shameful policy of clawing it back.

MOHAWK COLLEGE

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Friday was an exciting day for one of Hamilton's premier post-secondary education facilities, Mohawk College. MPP Jeff Leal, on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, in conjunction with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, marked the official opening of Mohawk's new Industrial and Process Automation Training and Applied Research Centre, a \$10-million project designed to train students for what the industry says is one of the most pressing needs.

But the measure of this wonderful program was quickly evident when Ray Myler, a student, came to the podium. It's his second time through the Hamilton-based school. But in a world where jobs change almost overnight, continuing education is the price of staying employed. Mr. Myler spoke without notes and from the heart as he thanked the provincial government and the various industrial partners. He said this was a wonderful second chance for his success in life.

Mohawk president MaryLynn West-Moynes said in a statement to the Hamilton Spectator, "We are absolutely

thrilled at the opportunity that this investment has created for our students and partners."

This government is proudly encouraging and supporting our young people to be the best they can be. Our future depends on it. On behalf of the students, the stakeholders and the community, Hamilton says thank you.

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RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): We're hearing some old expressions on the back roads and in small-town Ontario: "One for all and all for one," and also, "You can hang alone or you can hang together." This has been the winter of our discontent in rural Ontario, and whether it be intrusive landowner restrictions or the need for help for one commodity or another, a common response prevails, and that is unity.

There are many rural problems, many rural organizations, as we know, and many rural voices. These voices are all sending one message to achieve shared goals. Those goals are to educate, to inform, and to reach out not only to the Legislative Assembly, but also to people across this part of North America, where the rural way of life is now threatened.

There are so many issues: sawmills being shut down—we hope the environment minister will be at the rural rally tomorrow; greenbelt devaluation of property—we expect to see the municipal affairs minister at Queen's Park tomorrow; community halls and schools closing their doors—folks are looking for the education minister to be there on Wednesday; wildlife damage to crops—that's for our MNR minister; and of course the crises in beef and hogs and tobacco and cash crop—our ag minister and our Premier need to meet with constituents tomorrow.

Our plea: Don't divide and conquer. Don't play one crop against another. Don't play one organization against another. And we'll see you all Wednesday.

WOMEN OF NIPISSING

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today on this International Women's Day to celebrate the wonderful women of Nipissing. Yes, from advocates to CEOs to international celebrities to unsung heroes, we have too many fabulous women to mention them all, but I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate a few who are contributing so much to our community and who are providing great role models.

We have our municipal leaders: the mayor of Chisholm, Barb Groves; the mayor of Bonfield, Narry McCarthy; the mayor of Nipissing, Wendy Billingsley; the deputy mayor of Callander, Virginia Onley; and many, many councillors in a variety of our communities.

We have health care leaders, such as the CEO of our Northeast Mental Health Centre, Jean Trimnell, and our psychiatrist-in-chief, Susan Adams, who are doing great

work. Of course, Lisa McCool Philbin is doing great things at the Community Counselling Centre, and there's our medical officer of health, Catherine Whiting, and Dr. Wendy Graham, a provincial leader in family health reform. In our long-term-care homes, we have Mrs. Monestine and Vala in Mattawa at the Algonquin, Beth Campbell at Casselhome, Yvonne Weir at Leisureworld, and of course Laura Pierce, who is the chair of the Mattawa hospital board.

In the area of social policy, the list is almost too long to even start, but I would like to mention the tireless efforts of Lana Mitchell at Low Income People Involvement, Rev. Elizabeth Fraser, the chair at Community Housing Action Group, Gisèle Hébert at the children's aid society, Christine Woods at the crisis centre, and of course Janine Lafreniere at Transition House.

All of these women contribute so much to our community. They are role models.

Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention my mom at the very end, another woman I'm very proud to say is a staunch member of the Nipissing proud women community.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I rise today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to agriculture. The McGuinty government fully supports Ontario farmers and our strong agri-food industry. We understand the issues facing rural Ontario and are working hard every day with our partners to address those issues.

This is a government that has already taken necessary steps, such as exempting the land transfer tax on family farms, investing in increased abattoir capacity for older animals, establishing a new renewable fuel standard that will require that gasoline sold in Ontario contain an average of 5% ethanol by 2007 to help our corn farmers, and providing up to \$30 million to help the cattle industry recover from the fallout of BSE.

Last Friday, I met with the Wellington Federation of Agriculture to discuss their concerns about agriculture and the agri-food industry. Much like Minister Peters, who met with farmers at last Wednesday's rally, I firmly believe that the best way to understand agricultural issues is to meet with the farmers who deal with those problems every day.

The McGuinty government is always willing to sit down with any agricultural group that wants to constructively discuss its needs and concerns. All farmers and farm groups are encouraged to come forward with constructive contributions toward government policies. The door is open, and we are listening.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS AND SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): On International Women's Day, it saddens me that I have to talk

about women's shelters and second-stage housing. It is unfortunate that those places of refuge still exist because violence against women is still a dark reality.

That being said, I am proud to rise today to talk about what the McGuinty government is doing to help women and their children fleeing domestic violence. For too long this issue has been repeatedly put on the back burner. Today's announcement means that the shelters in my riding, like the Women's House of Bruce County and the Women's Shelter, Second Stage Housing and Counselling Services of Huron, will be better equipped to provide a safer and healthier environment for women staying in their facilities.

This morning on CBC Radio, Darlene Ritchie, executive director of At'lohsha Native Family Healing Services, made a point: "We were down to using one shower upstairs because, you know, after 14 years of using a shower, the caulking is starting to dry out and we're having leaks. So we'll renovate our three bathrooms in that house to serve those 16 women and their children."

I am so proud that this government is taking action. As part of the \$66-million domestic violence action plan today, 98 women's shelters and second-stage housing providers will receive a total of \$2 million for capital improvements and cost-saving upgrades. This money will also pay for wheelchair ramps and repairs to crumbling buildings, and will invest in efficiencies so that cash-strapped agencies will see savings for years to come. But mostly, today's announcement means that women and their children will have safer, more secure places to stay at a very difficult time.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLICATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS (PUBLICATION DES CONTRIBUTIONS)

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act to require publication of contributions / Projet de loi 180, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections pour exiger la publication des contributions.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Arnott?

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Members of this House will recall that during question period last Thursday, I signalled my intent to introduce a bill of this type. Since that time, the government has introduced its own legislation, as has the member for Toronto-Danforth.

This adds another bill to the mix, but mine is different from the other two. My bill amends the Election Finances Act to require that a political party post on its Web site on the Internet information about contributions of \$100 or more at the time it deposits the contributions into its account or that each of its constituency associations, official candidates or leadership contestants deposit the contributions into their accounts. The information consists of the name of the contributor and the amount of the contribution.

In the case of a contribution to a candidate who is not a candidate of an official political party at an election, the candidate is required to post the information on the candidate's Web site. A party or a candidate who does not maintain a Web site is required to post the information on the Web site that the Chief Election Officer designates.

This is real-time financial disclosure of political contributions, because it would compel the political parties to disclose the information the very day they cash the cheque.

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PROTECTION AGAINST ILLICIT DRUG GROW HOUSES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LES INSTALLATIONS DE CULTURE INTÉRIEURE DE DROGUES ILLICITES

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to provide protection against grow houses for marijuana and other illicit drugs / Projet de loi 181, Loi prévoyant une protection contre les installations de culture intérieure de marijuana et d'autres drogues illicites.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Martiniuk?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This bill provides that certain powers contrary to grow houses that some municipalities now have be extended to unincorporated municipalities in Ontario. It also amends the Conveyancing and Law of Property Act to provide that a vendor must reveal in any agreement of purchase and sale if the building or structure has been used to grow any illicit drugs. It goes on to amend the Tenant Protection Act to permit the landlord of any rental unit to enter and view the rental premise to determine whether it's being used for the purpose of growing illicit drugs.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): We have with us in the speaker's gallery Mr. Philippe Delacroix, the consul general of France in Toronto. Please join me in welcoming him here.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Ontarians are proud Canadians. We are proud of our role in helping other provinces financially, we are proud of our place as the linchpin of the nation and we are especially proud of our country's role in the world. But I can tell you I was not proud of the recent federal budget's failure to address the \$23-billion gap between what Ontario contributes to the federation and what it gets back. The federal budget was disappointing to me and to Ontario because it continues the unfair treatment that shortchanges this province's taxpayers by billions of dollars.

The issue that concerns me as Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is funding for public infrastructure. Ontario doesn't get its proper—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member from Nepean-Carleton, I'd like you to control yourself and come to order.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I can sense that the members opposite are incensed as well that Ontario doesn't get its share of federal funding programs designed to help maintain public infrastructure like roads, bridges, public transit and water treatment facilities. Ottawa has four infrastructure funding programs. Ontario is getting less than its fair share under all four. I want to highlight all of them for the House today.

The Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund provides some \$4 billion for transit and transportation improvements, urban development and economic expansion. The federal budget allocates Ontario \$92 per person from this fund. The rest of Canada, excluding Ontario, gets \$146 per person. If Ontario received its fair share, there would be an extra \$670 million available for infrastructure in this province.

The Border Infrastructure Fund provides some \$600 million to improve border crossings. The busiest and most important border crossings in Canada are here in Ontario, especially in Windsor, which handles 11,000 trucks per day. About 75% of the value of all goods trucked to the US moves through the Ontario border crossings, but these crossings get only 51% of the federal funding. If Ontario received its fair share, some 75% of the funding, there would be an additional \$145 million for border infrastructure investments in Ontario over the life of the program.

The municipal rural infrastructure fund: This fund provides \$1 billion to improve infrastructure in smaller municipalities and rural communities. Our rural municipalities desperately need help with roads, sewers and water treatment facilities. Renfrew county, for example, has more than 260 bridges and culverts and must finance

major repairs for at least half of them within the next 10 years. No surprise then that applications from Ontario municipalities for funding under this program are double the money that is available. The federal budget allocates \$24 per person for rural municipalities in Ontario. Compare that with \$36 per person in the rest of Canada. If Ontario received its fair share, some \$36 per person, that would mean an additional \$150 million available for Ontario rural municipalities over the life of the program.

Under the strategic highway infrastructure program, Ottawa has earmarked \$600 million over five years to rebuild and expand the nation's highway system. Any help, of course, is welcome, but it's not nearly enough. Ontario will invest some \$1 billion this year alone for highway rehabilitation and expansion. We have the busiest highways in the country, and keeping our transportation network in good shape is essential to the economy not only of our province, but of our country. Ontario receives \$15 per person under this program. The rest of Canada, excluding Ontario, gets \$21 per person. If Ontario were to receive \$21 per person, as is the case with every other province, there would be an additional \$74 million available for strategic highway infrastructure in Ontario.

This government has a plan to invest in the drivers of economic growth, things like high-quality public education, post-secondary education, training and, of course, infrastructure. Strategic investments in these areas now will pay dividends well into the future. Investments now mean more money to contribute to the rest of Canada tomorrow. Ontarians are proud Canadians. With help from the federal government, Ontario will be able to continue to assist other provinces, strengthen our federation and, most especially, ensure Canada's place in the world.

WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise to address the House on the important issue of women's health and what our government is doing to meet the health needs of the women in this province. The fact that I am doing so on this particular day is significant. In 1977 the United Nations declared March 8 to be International Women's Day to call attention to and to celebrate the social and political progress that women have made in recent history. While improving women's social and political status are the dominant themes you might hear in commentary today, I would like to take a moment to discuss women's health issues, another area in which continued improvement must absolutely be the norm.

The simple fact is that women have health needs that are distinctive and often unique. Historically, in health care, we have not been as responsive to that fact as we should be. It was not that long ago when clinical trials would be performed on men and the results extrapolated and applied to women, something we now understand to be bad science and even worse medicine. So while our government is working hard to improve our health care

system for all Ontarians, we remain mindful that there are specific measures that must be taken to ensure that women are receiving the health care they need.

For example, breast cancer continues to be the most common form of cancer for women. Ontario is the first and only Canadian province to provide comprehensive screening services for those at risk of developing hereditary breast, ovarian or colon cancer. My ministry currently allocates \$28.5 million to the Ontario breast screening program, which is designed to reduce the mortality rate of breast cancer through a comprehensive early detection program.

Cervical cancer is another critically important women's health issue. Just today, our government announced that we are investing \$1 million in community labs for new technology that will reduce wait times for cervical screening test results and improve the accuracy of those tests. This will enable Ontario women to make more informed decisions about their health care needs sooner.

1400

Violence against women might best be described as a social disease. It is certainly a significant health issue. The ministry provides \$15.1 million for 34 approved hospital-based sexual assault treatment centres, which serve more than 4,500 victims annually, mostly women and children.

Midwives provide care to women during normal pregnancy and labour and to women and their newborn babies during the postpartum period. Ontario was the first province to regulate and fund the midwifery profession as part of its provincial health care system. In 2004, an estimated 310 midwives were registered to provide services through about 50 ministry-funded midwifery practice groups.

Just today, a number of Ontario hospitals announced a joint initiative, funded by our government, called the Fetal Alert Network. This program is designed to improve health care for pregnant women and their unborn babies with birth defects.

In Ontario, women account for 29% of all new HIV diagnoses. We have expanded the Ontario prenatal screening program to include HIV testing. As a result, all pregnant women in Ontario are now offered HIV testing, which is provided with appropriate counselling and informed consent. Currently, about 90% of pregnant women receive a prenatal HIV test in this province. The ministry also funds community-based AIDS groups for HIV-infected women and support for the families.

The ministry funds 334 community mental health agencies, some of which are specifically targeted to address women's mental health issues. One example is eating disorders, for which we currently provide \$8.5 million to support specialized treatment programs.

Young, single, homeless women have mortality rates 10 times higher than women in the general population. The Ontario Women's Health Council has undertaken two projects: One focuses on service integration for homeless women, and the second explores the develop-

ment of curriculum for health professionals working with homeless women. The mental health and addictions branch provides approximately \$9.5 million in funding to 48 women-specific addiction programs in Ontario. Other addiction programs also provide services that are specifically for women.

The early childhood development addictions initiative provides outreach, addiction treatment and ancillary services to pregnant women with addictions.

The heart health program addresses the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease with specific attention to women. Last year's budget announced annual funding of \$30 million to develop strategies aimed at integrating and strengthening aspects of stroke prevention. The strategy addresses gender differences—in particular, the impact and prevention of strokes in women.

Osteoporosis is a highly debilitating disease that affects approximately 530,000 Ontarians—one in four women and one in eight men. The osteoporosis strategy aims to prevent and manage osteoporosis and reduce disability, pain and suffering. The government recently approved the osteoporosis strategy, with funding starting this fiscal year at \$881,000, and rising to \$5 million in 2007-08 and ongoing.

Finally, we have the tentative agreement that we have just reached with the Ontario Medical Association, an agreement that was unanimously endorsed by the OMA board. This deal contains several measures to improve women's health care, including a strong focus on better access to preventive care like mammography screening. In addition, for female doctors we're expanding the province's pregnancy and parental leave programs.

All of these initiatives are part of the McGuinty government's comprehensive plan to improve health care in Ontario for all Ontarians.

One size doesn't necessarily fit all in health care. Women have certain specific health issues, and consequently specific health care needs. It is our job to meet those needs, and I am proud to say that our government is working very hard to do exactly that.

In closing, I would just like to touch briefly on another aspect of health care as it relates to women, and that is the extraordinary number of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals from every health care field who are women. It seems appropriate on International Women's Day that I take this opportunity to salute them and ask others to join with me in recognizing the excellent job they all do.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the statement by my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Listen, we want to see greater federal investment in the province's infrastructure, no doubt about it.

Applause.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the minister's applause. But I've got to tell you that it's a little too cute by half, because months ago, the minister couldn't wait to celebrate the days of wines and roses, this really close, hand-in-hand relationship that he had with his federal colleagues. Now, it's whines with an "h," as opposed to w-i-n-e-s. The problem here that Dalton McGuinty faces is that he has no credibility. He has no credibility with Ontario taxpayers because of his 40-plus broken promises, and he has no credibility when it comes to negotiating with the federal government.

Let me tell you why. About a year and a half ago Dalton McGuinty accepted, on bended knee, a bad SARS deal that sold the province of Ontario well short of what we deserved, and like some Oliver Twist character, he went back and said, "Please, sir, can I have another?" During the first ministers' meeting, Dalton McGuinty—to put an old Trudeau maxim on his head—basically was a head waiter to the Prime Minister and his cabinet. He couldn't do enough to get up close and personal with Paul Martin and his cabinet. And as a result of this weak negotiating strategy, we are not receiving our fair share.

What's really happening is that they're setting up a straw man. For a year and a half, they tried to blame the previous government. We saw recently at ROMA, that every minister that tried that old trick got booed and jeered. Now, they've turned tail to blaming Paul Martin and the federal government. Folks, it just is not going to cut it.

Dalton McGuinty has to do one thing: look at himself in the mirror, point his finger straight at his own chest and admit to the people of Ontario that he made promises that he knew he could not complete. He made promises that he knew he was going to break. The result is that they're looking for somebody else to blame, when the blame rests squarely on Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal cabinet.

So I'll say to the minister that I appreciate the response. Let's see those investments in border areas like Windsor, like Fort Erie, like Niagara Falls. Let's see those investments in rural infrastructure—you mentioned Renfrew county—or Wainfleet or West Lincoln or the vast part of northern Ontario. But he can't forget that while transit investment is welcome from the gas tax, there are 340 municipalities that did not get dime one of those funds. We'd like to see that as well.

WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Health. I wish he were here to hear this.

The minister announced this morning \$1 million of investment in cervical cancer screening. That's federal money, and it's certainly welcome to our hospitals. We on this side of the House, though, will be watching and following up on every one of those hospitals that received funding for equipment to ensure that they actually have the funds to operate that equipment, because this

government is good at making announcements for capital dollars and announcements for medical equipment but leaving the hospitals high and dry.

I just hope that the nurses who will be operating this equipment aren't dizzy, because they are hiring and then firing so many nurses. Some hospitals have welcoming parties and going-away parties on the same day for the nurses hired by the McGuinty government. The minister himself admitted that he is firing 757 nurses. That's exactly what the McGuinty government is all about. They brought in a new health tax, and they're using that money to pay for severance packages for the 757 nurses that they fired.

The Ontario Women's Health Council, an initiative of the Harris government and its former minister, who sits in the House today, has done some great work. We should acknowledge that effort, particularly headed by its chair, Jane Pepino, who is an incredibly devoted Ontarian who has contributed much to the province, not just in law but particularly in the area of health care and a special place for women's health. She has devoted much time and energy.

I would have thought that the Minister of Health would have risen and talked about Fabry disease and about the funding that should be coming, the funding that he promised to meet the needs of patients with that. In Ottawa, we continue to have one or two patients who are suffering deeply from this minister's inaction.

I visited Granite Ridge in Stittsville. I would have thought that the minister would have acknowledged the mistake he's made by cutting off schedule 5 physiotherapy, where literally hundreds and thousands of men and women—particularly women—who need physiotherapy in our long-term-care services will have that service cut by 100% in two weeks' time. It's clear that this minister has no plan for health care, and it's clear this minister is not up to dealing with the schedule 5 physiotherapy services for many Ontario women.

1410

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I'm responding to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. I'm sitting here listening to the minister and he's talking about all the money we are owed from the federal government. It made me pause to think, what do we do now with all the money that we actually get from the federal government?

Every year the federal government gives this province some \$220 million to alleviate poverty for the poorest of the poor children in Ontario, and every year this government chooses to claw back the money from those very same poor children to ensure that they continue to live in poverty. The money that is earmarked for them is not spent on them; it's spent on some other government program.

Every year the federal government makes \$300 million available to this province to build housing. How

much housing have we built in this province? Almost nothing. They give us \$300 million. It's there and it's available, and then the government chooses not to line up and spend that money. They promised 20,000 units of affordable housing; they've built none. They promised 6,000 units of supportive housing; they've built none. The \$300 million that is made available is totally wasted.

Even when the federal government makes the money available, you choose to take one of two paths: You choose to spend it somewhere else or you choose not to spend it at all. Why are you asking for money that you have no intention of using in the first place? If I was in the federal government, that's the question I would ask the McGuinty government. I'd say, "You're asking for money, but you don't spend it when we give it to you; or if you do, you spend it on something else."

You are saying now that you want to spend it on transit, you want to spend it on border infrastructure, you want to spend it on rural infrastructure and you want to spend it on highways. But if you get the money, I have to honestly ask you, are you going to spend it in these areas or are you going to pocket the money? Are you going to put it against the deficit? Are you going to spend it on some other government program or are you not going to spend it at all? That has been your history in this province. That has been what this Liberal government has chosen to do. If I was sitting up there in Ottawa, I would have to tell you that I'd have a very jaundiced view of what you are requesting today.

WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto—Danforth): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of our critic Shelley Martel, who can't be with us this afternoon. She is in her riding for International Women's Day.

I respond to the health minister. Three things—I wish I had more time; there would be more. First of all, on your announcement on buying the equipment for cervical cancer testing: It's a very important announcement. We've been demanding that this be done for some time. We're pleased to see you announce it today, but we now of course look forward to hearing the minister in the coming days—very soon—announce the money for the staff needed to run the equipment, because without that staff you can't use it. This was federal money that was used for this.

Second—

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's for replacement equipment.

Ms. Churley: Whatever—you had your chance.

Second, the examples of—

Interjections.

Ms. Churley: This is a very serious announcement. I wish you would listen.

The examples of unprotected patient care services—which we brought up in this Legislature many times once the minister told the hospitals they had to cut back. We brought up the fact—and it's still an issue out there; it

hasn't been corrected—that patient care services at risk for elimination because they were not mandated by this government included most of the special women's health programs in hospitals, like abortion, obstetrics, birth control, fertility clinics, post-partum services and on and on. These services are not protected under your government. So when you demanded that the hospitals make the cuts, guess what they were going to do from the very beginning? Cut the unmandated services. So the women's programs—the ones you are bragging about today—were on the top of the list of the chopping block.

Minister, the third thing I would like to talk to you about is the need, as demonstrated by your announcement today, to bring forward my adoption disclosure bill and pass it, because you're quite right that we know more and more now about diseases like ovarian cancer and breast cancer. Studies show that we can now add cervical cancer to that list of women who have a genetic predisposition to these kinds of cancers. There were programs actually brought in by the previous government on ovarian and breast cancer, and cervical cancer should be added to that for pre-screening of women who have these cancers in their families. But of course, adoptees have no way of knowing whether these cancers exist in their families, so it's more and more critical that this bill be passed so those women have that screening opportunity as well. Right now, they are being discriminated against.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on International Women's Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Let me start by wishing a very happy International Women's Day on behalf of our caucus and all members of the House to the people of Ontario. It is a pleasure, as the minister responsible for women's issues, to stand and note International Women's Day today, March 8. This is an occasion to reflect on the progress our society has made toward advancing women's equality and to consider the steps we still need to take to help women achieve their full participation in our society.

In 1977, the United Nations adopted a resolution inviting countries around the world to dedicate this day to celebrating the rights of women and international peace. It is now a global celebration of women's accomplishments and advancements toward equality. We've come a long way from the days when women could not vote, could not be a member of Parliament, were denied jobs considered suitable only for men. Imagine what this House would be like if we didn't have women in it. It is so much better a place today because we have women as members of the Legislature.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I accept that on behalf of all the women in the Legislature today.

The gains women have made, though, have been hard won, but every gain is worthy of a celebration. Last fall, two women were appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, bringing the total number on the nine-member bench to four. That makes the Canadian Supreme Court one of the most gender-balanced in the world.

Women stand out in every single field. Businesses that are owned and run by women are growing faster than most parts of the Canadian economy. Women aren't just creating jobs but creating entire companies at double the rate of the national average. There are now almost 10,000 members of the Women's Executive Network, Canada's most influential organization dedicated to the advancement and recognition of executive women in the workplace. Women are a key resource in meeting Canada's skill shortages in sectors where they are under-represented.

Our government's women in skilled trades program offers a pre-apprenticeship training program designed exclusively for women to help them enter a variety of highly skilled and in-demand technology areas and apprenticeships. Our partners for change program works in partnership with external organizations to develop programs and resources that promote the participation of young women for careers in math, science and technology, areas where women have traditionally not been highly represented. We also help unemployed and low-income women train for good jobs in the information technology field through the information technology training for women program.

Our government is committed to creating a prosperous Ontario in which women are able to be economically independent and participate fully in the province's social and economic life. I'm proud that our government has made advances so we could assist women in achieving this. I'm proud that we have done immeasurable work in the area of domestic violence. Over the past 18 months we've increased Ontario Works benefits, Ontario disability supports. We've begun the increase to minimum wage. Thanks to our Minister of Labour for that.

On December 13, we announced a domestic violence action plan, a significant plan that attacks this issue in four significant areas: public education, community supports, training and, most importantly, justice; and significant increases in resources to assist French-language services for this area. Thanks to all 13 ministers who participate in our interministerial task force against domestic violence. Our plan contains a range of prevention, early intervention and justice, all intended to help women who have been abused and their children.

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On February 24, we committed \$1.9 million in additional funding to sexual assault centres across Ontario. This includes significant new funding to the francophone community. Again, thanks to our Attorney General for this.

A \$25-million increase in the aboriginal health and wellness program is a significant boon to women and children who are living on our reserves and in our native communities across Ontario.

Today we're investing another \$2 million to help 98 women's shelters and second-stage housing help keep their facilities safe and accessible for women and children. This funding will be used for security upgrades, accessibility improvements, health and safety renovations and other efficiency and cost-saving projects.

Child care: For the first time, our minister for children is investing \$57 million of federal money in child care. This helps women. Also today, thank you to our Minister of Health for the announcement today where we commit \$1 million to community laboratories as part of our cancer prevention strategy for women. This \$1 million has been earmarked by the McGuinty government for the introduction of laboratory equipment and new technology for cervical cancer screening.

You will notice across this government a significant increase in the number of appointments to this government's agencies, boards and commissions. We are proud of that fact. I believe we have made advancements in the issues that are important to women. Let us be clear: We have much more work to do, and it will take all of us in this House to band together and move the issues for women forward.

Today, for International Women's Day, let us celebrate our achievements and recognize the thousands of women in Ontario who are improving the status of women every day. Many of them go unsung, and we are proud of the work they do. Let's also consider what each one of us can do in our own communities, in our own constituencies, in our own neighbourhoods, to promote women as equal partners in our society.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today I'm proud to stand on behalf of our caucus and recognize International Women's Day, a day that was established in 1977 by the United Nations. This is a special day that provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress that has been made to advance women's equality, to assess the challenges facing women in contemporary society, to consider future steps to enhance the status of women, and of course it's an opportunity for us to celebrate the gains we have made.

The Canadian theme for this year's International Women's Week is You Are Here: Women, Canada, and the World. In Beijing in 1995, member nations of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women met to map out guidelines for measuring progress on achieving gender equality. At Beijing +5 in 2000, they met again to review their progress and achievements and to explore strategies to accelerate action. Beijing +10 brought those members together again to continue to discuss future approaches toward gender equality.

Some of the areas where they have been looking to make progress are in human rights, violence against women and children, health, unpaid work, poverty and women's diversity. I think what is notable is the fact that

the progress toward gender equality can be considered a continuing journey. Although the destination is clear, the route remains a challenge and, at times, a very difficult journey.

Let's take a look at some of the accomplishments and past achievements in Canada that deserve celebration. Certainly, if we take a look at education, in post-secondary education the barriers to women getting an education have been all but eliminated. In 2001, women comprised 59% of the undergraduate student enrolment and 50% of graduate student enrolment in Canada. If we take a look at some of the fields and some of the professions that had traditionally been male-dominated, we see that these fields have opened up to women. Women are pursuing careers in growing numbers in the fields of medicine, law, business and engineering. In 2003, while women represented only 29% of the total number of physicians in Ontario, they represented 45% of physicians under the age of 35. A similar trend is found among the representation of female lawyers in Ontario. And by 2003, 53% of people enrolled in the bar admission course were women.

In business, as the 21st century gets underway, it is expected that about half of Canada's new companies will be started by women. The Institute for Small Business noted that between 1991 and 1994, Canadian firms run by women created new jobs at four times the rate of the national average. Women are creating not just jobs but entire companies at double the rate of the national average.

We also know that the pay gap has shrunk. The earnings of women employed full-time in Canada were 71.6% of those of men in 2001. So progress has been made, but there's more to do.

I heard the minister speak about the Women's Health Council. Our government, under the leadership of Premier Harris, was very proud to establish that Women's Health Council. We recognized that women had specific health issues, and we wanted to ensure that these women in Ontario were receiving the health care they needed.

However, despite the gains that we've made in Canada, we appear to have hit a plateau or in some cases even moved backwards in the move toward equality in some areas. In particular, women are missing from the top rungs of the corporate ladder and also from the boardrooms of Canadian corporations.

In politics today, only about one fifth of those who hold elected office are women. In Europe, we have about a third to a half. In fact, when I became an MPP in 1990, it appeared women were on the verge of a breakthrough to achieving more equal representation in Canadian legislatures, but we have moved backwards then since. Today, for the first time in about 15 years, none of Canada's political parties federally are headed by a woman, none of Canada's Premiers are women, and none of the mayors of our largest cities are women. The proportion of women MPs, which had been climbing for 30 years, declined from 21% to 18% in the last federal election, in 2004.

So the challenge remains not just in Ontario but throughout the world. We need to move toward eliminating poverty and violence, and we need to ensure that there are equality rights for women of every race, language, ethnicity, economic status and ability. We've seen tangible progress on many fronts. So today, let us take the opportunity to rededicate ourselves to moving forward, to making sure that women have the right to live in dignity, in freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On behalf of New Democrats everywhere, I want to wish everybody a happy International Women's Day. Of course, as a proud feminist, I behave as though every day is International Women's Day.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Just like Jim Wilson.

Interjections.

Ms. Churley: Yes, just like Jim Wilson here, who thinks we should have that. As John Baird said, "You go, girl," which is what I'm about to do, because this is an occasion when we applaud our impressive accomplishments in all different areas of society and honour the work of our sisters in our immediate midst and throughout the globe who are in one form or another fighting for women's freedom from discrimination and violence.

It's an understatement to say that there is a lot of work left to be done, on all fronts and in many places, some more seriously in other parts of the world, but some issues to be dealt with here locally as well.

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In Canada, many mistake women's prevalence in the labour force and post-secondary education as measures of having achieved equality now. Statistics about females making up over half the student body in post-secondary and entering high-profile fields such as law and medicine in record numbers—

Mr. Bisson: And politics.

Ms. Churley: —no; not in politics—are cited as proof that gender discrimination is a relic of a past era. But I've got news for you: Scratch underneath the surface and you will find obstacles. They have taken on a different form, and we had better address them. Overt discrimination has been replaced with unwelcoming and sometimes hidden attitudes. Closed doors have been supplanted with more glass ceilings and workplace cultures that deter women from reaching for the door in the first place.

Our Legislature illustrates those different obstacles women face. In the arena of public decision-making, here we are in 2005 and women are still drastically under-represented. Why at this point are there only 23 of us here? One reason, and there are others, is that our electoral system works against women getting elected. More women are elected under some form of proportional representation than first-past-the-post. And it is uncertain that in Ontario, given the minister's announcement, we will see the electoral system change to balance the playing field. The bill on democratic renewal released yesterday by the minister responsible for democratic renewal

did not include explicit measures to address the gender deficit, and I can assure him that I will be addressing that.

Level of safety is another tally measure of women's status in society. Violence against women remains a prevalent and growing crisis, while efforts in some areas to end it have suffered setbacks. There is a troubling rise in sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Sexual harassment is still not recognized as an occupational health and safety issue or criminal charge, and as you know, I have a private member's bill that I would like to see passed to address that. The occurrence of sexual assault has also increased, particularly incidents involving younger women as the victims.

Domestic violence continues to rise, and the Liberal government's strategy to combat domestic violence will not stop that trend. Instead, the plan has too many broken promises and inadequate policies, in some cases putting women more at risk.

I want to underscore some particularly troublesome parts of the plan, starting with its treatment of shelters and second-stage housing. The lack of housing options is among the two top reasons that make women remain with or return to their abusers, because there is nowhere to go. But instead of providing sustained increased funds for beds and programs and more housing, the government has given shelters more money to hire fundraisers and has not kept its promise to build 20,000 new units of affordable housing.

Finally, I want to tell you about a couple of events that are coming up today. There are many to celebrate and honour International Women's Day. Judy Rebick's book launch of *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution*, is tonight, with a tremendous panel of distinguished women at Ryerson University's Jorgenson Hall. I invite all people to go and hear about the history of the feminist movement in Ontario and Canada.

Also, I want to tell you about what I've done today to mark International Women's Day. I've launched a contest on my Web site called "Who do you think is Ontario's greatest woman?" because inexplicably, no women made the CBC's top 10 greatest Canadians. So I decided that we would have our own contest here in Ontario to showcase the incredible women who live or once lived in our great province. I think more needs to be done to celebrate our top Canadian women, and this is an opportunity for women in Ontario to go to my Web site, www.MarilynChurley.com, and vote for—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): —for Marilyn Churley, NDP.

Ms. Churley: No, no. Judy Rebick could be one of those, as an example, but this is a chance for people. I'm piggybacking off the CBC's Greatest Canadian.

One of my favourite aspects of the CBC's contest was the way it educated and reminded us of the incredible accomplishment of Canadians throughout our national history and today. I hope this contest will allow us to celebrate Ontario's fabulous women, past and present. So I invite everybody to go to my Web site and vote for your favourite greatest Ontario woman.

POLICE OFFICERS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in memory of the four RCMP officers who were tragically killed in the line of duty. I would ask the Speaker to observe a moment of silence after the tribute.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The government House leader has asked that we have unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Today we mourn the deaths of four fine young men, all police officers who died in the line of duty in the small community of Mayerthorpe, Alberta.

The deaths of RCMP Constables Anthony Gordon, Leo Johnston, Brock Myrol, and Peter Schiemann, who was born in Petrolia, Ontario, are deeply mourned by all Canadians. The fact that these four men were so startlingly young, so filled with promise and hope, and so imbued with a sense of honour and purpose in the careers they loved makes their deaths all the more tragic and difficult to understand. Their deaths are a devastating blow to their families, to the RCMP, to the community in which they served, to the wider policing community, and to the country as a whole.

Their deaths are also a terrible reminder of the dangers that all police officers face as they go about their duties. Every police officer knows and accepts the risks involved with his or her job. They put their lives on the line every time they report for duty. Police officers know first-hand the dangers that accompany their sworn duty to protect the public. Each officer realizes the dangers and rewards associated with this profession. Those rewards come from making a real and profound difference to the safety and security of the communities in which the officers serve, from knowing at the end of the day that the place they call home and the people who live there are safer because they did their job. Unfortunately, it is often only when tragedy strikes that we realize just what that job entails. It humbles us and reminds us of the debt that we owe.

A note attached to a bouquet of sunflowers left outside the RCMP detachment in Mayerthorpe said it simply and said it best: "Thank you for protecting our community and our people. You're not just Mounties. You're our friends and family and you will be greatly missed."

As we offer our deepest sympathies to the families of Constables Gordon, Johnston, Myrol and Schiemann, let us take a moment to thank all the fine men and women who put their lives on the line each day to keep us, our children and our communities safe. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I offer our profound and heartfelt condolences and thanks.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On behalf of our leader, John Tory, and our caucus, I'm honoured to take part in this special tribute here today.

Last Thursday, a tragedy occurred in Mayerthorpe, Alberta, that shocked our nation. Four RCMP officers were brutally murdered. The incident was the worst spree of killing of Canada's law enforcement officers in over 120 years. The four officers, Constable Tony Gordon, Constable Brock Myrol, Constable Leo Johnston and Constable Peter Schiemann, were all members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

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The RCMP, or Mounties, have one of the most storied histories of any police service in the world, and that, of course, includes agencies like Scotland Yard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The RCMP, an organization symbolic of our nation, are known for their colourful uniforms and Stetson hats. They are also known for their legendary musical rides. Known as the North-West Mounted Police when they were created in 1873 by Sir John A. Macdonald, the Mounties helped to colonize western and northern Canada using a peaceful strategy.

The RCMP have always held a special presence wherever they appeared. I can think back to the summer of 2000, when an RCMP officer accompanied the Millennium Trail participants throughout central Ontario. Wherever the participants stopped for a dedication on the trail, the RCMP officer was inundated and swarmed with requests for his photo to be taken with the participants and onlookers.

The Mounties have always had a special place in the film industry. It is my understanding that the Mounties have been involved in more than 400 films and set a tone in Hollywood.

Even a week ago last Saturday night, I had the privilege of attending a retirement dinner for Chief Fantino, and one of the keynote speakers was RCMP Commissioner Giuliano Zaccardelli. Commissioner Zaccardelli spoke about the wonderful partnerships between the police services in our country and indeed even international policing. The common tie to our Canadian police services is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police force. You can imagine the pain on the face of Commissioner Zaccardelli last Friday when he discussed with the media the tragic loss of his four young officers.

In the coming weeks, there will be so many questions surrounding the horrible ambush that took the lives of these fine young officers. I'm confident that the answers to these questions will bring forth timely recommendations. A tragedy like this can never happen again. As legislators, we must provide our officers nationwide with the resources they need to be equipped for every conceivable incident.

On behalf of our caucus, I want to take this opportunity to pay respect to Constables Gordon, Myrol, Johnston and Schiemann. A very special thank you to their families for allowing their young men to serve and protect our nation. And finally, condolences and a thank you to the Canadian police family for continuing to make Canada a safe and secure society. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, the men and women of our Canadian police services put their lives on

the line so that we can all raise our families knowing that our communities are protected and secure. In closing, I would like to acknowledge the fact that our Sergeant at Arms, Dennis Clark, spent his career with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I want to recognize the incredible sacrifice of Constables Brock Myrol, Leo Johnston, Peter Schiemann and Anthony Gordon.

Every time police officers and other emergency workers go to work, they take an incredible risk, and there is no way we can repay the debt we owe to an officer who is killed on the job. The loss of these four officers is made all the more tragic by the youth of the four men. The oldest, Constable Johnston, was 32. The youngest, Constable Schiemann, was 25, a rookie. Their tragic deaths remind us of the sacrifice that so many other police officers have made while serving and protecting the public and they remind us of the proud legacy of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

We can never repay the debt we owe them. We will, however, note the legacy that these men leave behind. It is a legacy of service to their community, service to their country, service to their families and service to their colleagues. We can never make up for what has happened, but we must acknowledge this incredible sacrifice and do all we can to ensure that their sacrifice was not in vain.

We extend our condolences and our sympathies to their families, their colleagues and their friends.

The Speaker: Would all members and guests please rise to observe a moment of silence in memory of the four fallen officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On February 25, you said that you purposely did not meet with individuals who had interests in the greenbelt. Yesterday, in a staggering display of befuddlement, you said that maybe you did; you couldn't remember; it could be. Then, after a developer came forward thanking you for meeting him and exempting some of his lands from the greenbelt, you admitted you had met with the developer. After question period, you couldn't answer the simple question of what other developers you met with privately. It's been 24 hours, Minister. You've had time to check your daytimer. What other developers have you met with?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): To the best of my knowledge and belief, since the Greenbelt Act

was first introduced here on October 29, and the draft plan, I have not met with any other developers in a meeting. I may have met them socially somewhere or what have you, but I have not met with any other developers at all to discuss the greenbelt.

Mr. Runciman: When the minister made his commitment on TVO, he had no qualifications whatsoever: no timelines, no social meetings. He simply said he purposely didn't meet with developers.

The minister seems to have a strange relationship with the facts. The minister said yesterday that he met Silvio DeGasperi during game seven of the hockey playoffs and that the greenbelt wasn't a topic of discussion. Of course, those of us who are hockey fans know there was no game seven last year. Minister, we now know that in fact you had a private meeting in your office with Mr. DeGasperi on May 4, 2004, along with your political staff and Mr. DeGasperi's personal planner. In your final maps, Mr. DeGasperi had a \$15-million parcel of land exempted from your greenbelt. What science was this \$15-million land exemption based on?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Yes, you are correct: It was the sixth game of the Stanley Cup playoffs, not the seventh game; you're right. But it was on May 4 last year. I met with him for about—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: May 4, I believe it was, last year. He wanted to meet with me to specifically talk about the agricultural preserve in Pickering, and he did so. He wanted to know whether or not we would take out of our campaign commitment to preserve it for agricultural lands, and I told him we were not going to do that. It was a commitment we made to the people of Ontario and a commitment we were going to give. He didn't get his way, and that's the end of that particular story.

It's kind of interesting that the MZO with respect to the agricultural preserve was actually put on by David Young, a member of your government, back in 2003. What did the then finance minister, Janet Ecker, say? She said, "Pickering made a deal to protect these lands. The agricultural reserve is a valuable resource. If it's developed now, it's gone forever. That cannot be allowed to happen." Do you want to know something? We agreed with Janet Ecker.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Final supplementary.

Mr. Runciman: I don't think too many Ontario taxpayers would agree that a \$15-million exemption is not getting your way. It's becoming increasingly clear that there was no scientific basis for this \$15-million exemption. So far, the only evidence we see supporting the exemption was a \$10,000 cheque from Mr. DeGasperi, payable to the Liberal Party of Ontario, and a private meeting with Minister Gerretsen on May 4, 2004.

Since you were unable to recall which developers you met with and you've refused to release any science supposing your \$15-million exemption, will you release today your full schedule from the time you initially pro-

posed your greenbelt, December 2003, until now, revealing the name and nature of discussions for every developer you met with? Will you do that, Minister: release the information?

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Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As part of the consultation process, as I've indicated before in the House, I met with a number of municipal officials and their planners. I received two letters from the mayor of Vaughan, dated November 29 last year and January 28 this year. He specifically asked us to take a look at these lands and see whether they should be included in the greenbelt. We took a look at the lands. We met with the Ministry of Natural Resources people—when I say “we,” I mean the ministry. The natural resources scientists determined that the natural heritage systems of the streams and rivers should be protected and that the tableland, in effect, could be developed. We did exactly what we were asked to do by a council resolution from the city of Vaughan as per the request of the mayor of the city of Vaughan in two letters to us.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Runciman: The mayor takes issue with that as well, but we don't have time to get into that today. We know this story doesn't end with Minister Gerretsen.

My question is to the Acting Premier. We've learned that not only did Mr. DeGasperis meet privately with Minister Gerretsen; he also had private meetings on four separate occasions, between February 9, 2004, and September 8, 2004, with the Premier's top political adviser, David MacNaughton. This is the same David MacNaughton who engineered the McGuinty broken promises on the Oak Ridges moraine, giving developers the green light to build 6,000 houses after the Liberals promised that no houses would be built.

Acting Premier, how can you still claim the greenbelt was based on science when there is so much obvious political involvement in the process?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): It is really unfortunate that the opposition is engaging in tactics to smear the greenbelt. That's what this is all about. It's about smearing an initiative that is going to protect over 800,000 more acres.

Interjection: It's 8,500.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm sorry, 8,500 more acres. We know that the opposition wants to pave the greenbelt. We know that they are advocates for people who want to pave the greenbelt. Our government has committed to the greenbelt. We said it during our election campaign. We told the developers this is what we were going to do. We've passed the legislation. I know they're not happy, but we're proud of this greenbelt initiative.

Mr. Runciman: This is not just unfortunate; it's unseemly. In today's *Globe and Mail*, Murray Campbell characterized this issue as “a whiff of scandal.” Now there is a stench about this Liberal government and their dealings with developers.

Acting Premier, your boss isn't here today to answer the tough questions. After claiming all along that the greenbelt was based on science, we now find out that his top political adviser, David MacNaughton, has met with at least one developer four times. Worse, he met with at least one developer during the final drawing of the greenbelt maps and, coincidentally, at least one developer received an exemption worth, in this one case alone, at least \$15 million. How many other developers did the Premier's principal secretary meet with? Will you release his personal schedule today?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: This is obviously a campaign to smear a very progressive initiative this government committed to and has followed through on.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

The Acting Premier.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: They've asked for the science. It's on the Web site. The Premier sent the science over to them yesterday. They don't want to pay attention to the science. They claim that the developers have had a hand in the shaping of the greenbelt, an area that has only expanded in its scope since we came to office. It has gone beyond our commitment. They're suggesting that somehow developers have benefited from this. I would suggest that developers are in fact the ones who are most unhappy with the fact that this government has had the intestinal fortitude to go beyond our election commitment and to preserve green space in the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Runciman: We've heard the science referred to as voodoo or culinary or political science, certainly not real science. We have guidelines, not real science applied.

Let's review the facts as we know them. We now know that both the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Premier's top political adviser, David MacNaughton, had private meetings with at least one developer while the final greenbelt process was underway. We know several developers met with Premier McGuinty and Minister Sorbara at a private, swanky soiree at the Sorbara household in exchange for \$10,000 donations to the Ontario Liberal Party. The stench now reaches to the highest levels in the Premier's office, yet you continue to refuse to release any science behind the one exemption we know about. Acting Premier, if your government has nothing to hide, will you now agree to a full legislative inquiry into this growing scandal?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Our government has nothing to hide at all. We're very proud of what we have accomplished with the greenbelt, an initiative that was talked about by Bill Davis, and there has been no government since Bill Davis's that has had the strength of purpose to move forward and protect green space around the greater Toronto area.

I also want to remind the members opposite that the developer they have identified stands to lose far more with the preservation of the Duffins agricultural preserve than block 41, and that's his issue. Block 41 is a red

herring. This developer has sour grapes for this government. We protected the land that he wanted out of the greenbelt and we're not going to apologize for making sure that that land was included, as we said it would be.

The Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. May I ask the members to come to order. Can you stop the clock for a minute, please. The member for Oak Ridges and the member for Durham, I'm going to ask you to come to order.

New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier and it's about Premier McGuinty's secret \$10,000-a-head fundraiser for big developers. We know that big developers contributed \$10,000 each to the Liberal Party so they could have the Premier's ear before the greenbelt boundaries were drawn up. Yesterday, we learned the Minister of Municipal Affairs exempted lands from the greenbelt after holding secret meetings with a developer. But today my question is about other lands that you exempted from the greenbelt. They are called the peach fuzz lands, about 68,000 hectares of prime farmland wedged between Lake Ontario and the greenbelt's southern boundary. Can you tell us what science exempted this prime agricultural land from the greenbelt?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): The lands the member refers to are currently designated rural or agricultural lands. We've done the studies with all of the regional planning commissioners, who have signed off on the population, household and employment targets that we are going to have to accommodate. We expect some 3.7 million people and some two million jobs in this greater Golden Horseshoe region, and we want to have a conversation with municipalities about what the future of those lands should be: if they should be protected or if they should be used for residential or commercial-industrial purposes.

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Mr. Hampton: Here is the contradiction: The Christian Farmers say the peach fuzz lands are better farmland than the land you've included in the greenbelt. Environmental groups like the Pembina Institute, Ontario Nature and the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance all say that the science determines that the peach fuzz lands should be in the greenbelt, but they're not in the greenbelt. Why? What we know is this, that \$10,000-a-head secret meetings with the Premier, secret meetings involving the Minister of Municipal Affairs and developers, and presto, land comes out of the greenbelt. I ask again, where's the science that supports excluding the peach fuzz lands, prime agricultural land, from the greenbelt? We've heard excuses. Where's the science?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: There is no mystery to this whatsoever. In fact, our commitment was to include some 600,000 acres in the greenbelt. We've exceeded that with over one million acres in the greenbelt.

We recognize the need for future growth. I know, of course, that my friends in the New Democratic Party do not believe our province should grow. That's a difference of opinion we may have. We are expecting 3.7 million additional residents in the greater Golden Horseshoe and over two million jobs to be created. We think it is important and prudent that we engage municipalities in the future of what those lands should be used for.

Mr. Hampton: This is what the public sees: The public sees a government that keeps talking about science, but here you've got prime agricultural land, some of the best agricultural land in Ontario, and for no scientific reason it's excluded from the greenbelt. What do people see? Questionable secret land deals, swanky, high-priced fundraisers for developers, and backroom decisions on what land gets excluded. Yesterday you tried a little manoeuvre to divert public attention. You brought in your real, watered-down financial disclosure legislation, but your legislation contains a loophole that allows riding associations to continue to accept huge donations from developers, and none of it is disclosed.

Can you tell me, there's no science supporting the exclusion of the peach fuzz lands, what is the science that supports excluding contributions to riding associations from developers, a practice you yourself say is nefarious?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: What the public of Ontario sees is 1.8 million acres of protected lands, the first time that's happened in the province of Ontario.

It's ironic. When the New Democrats were in the government, they wanted to put landfills on top of these lands. We don't think that's acceptable. We think they should be protected. We think Ontarians ought to have that kind of legacy. I understand that we have a different vision than the folks on the left or the folks on the right. We see the ability to be green and to grow, to accommodate an expanding population and an expanding economy, contrary to the views my friends in the New Democratic Party have. I can certainly appreciate that. My friends in the Conservative Party want to pave it all. You don't want to grow. We think you can both green and grow at the same time—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: —and we believe we have struck the right balance.

Our plans in fact are supported by the regional planning commissioners, by municipal officials, by industry—

The Speaker: New question.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Acting Premier again: What the public sees are big developers paying big bucks and getting their land excluded from the greenbelt.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The question is to?

Mr. Hampton: To the Acting Premier.

What they see is that your so-called financial disclosure legislation is going to allow developers to continue to make those big dollar contributions through the side door.

Claridge Homes, Sakto Corp., Trinity Development, Homestead Land Holdings, CH2M Hill Construction, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association: These are developers or development interests that all made big contributions to a certain riding association in 2002 and 2003. Which riding association? Dalton McGuinty's riding association. And your legislation would continue to allow this to happen.

If you don't have any science for excluding the peach fuzz lands, can you tell us what's the science for allowing corporate developers to continue to have these kinds of financial loopholes?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I think that it's important that we identify for the Legislature, for the people who are listening today, that the minister introduced a bill for consideration yesterday for real-time disclosure. When you talk about a loophole, the legislation that he introduced would require any donation of over \$100 to be disclosed within a certain period of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Would you come to order, please? Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The minister responsible has responded to a campaign commitment, to requests from individuals in this Legislature that we would have legislation for real-time disclosure. He introduced that yesterday.

If you want to talk about loopholes, the NDP have introduced a private member's piece of legislation where they would allow \$500 donations to go undisclosed, so I don't think that they're in a very good position to accuse this government of loopholes.

Mr. Hampton: I want to draw the Acting Premier's attention to an article in the Toronto Star in May 2003, where the Toronto Star pointed out, "The Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals have funnelled parts of large donations through riding associations in order to evade the prescribed limits." In fact, the article notes that the former Conservative government was able to raise \$1 million by funneling it through riding associations, which otherwise wouldn't be available, much of that money coming from developers.

Now we look at your financial disclosure legislation, and what's it going to permit? It's going to permit that same kind of backdoor evasion. You say that this is about protecting green space, and then you tell us that your financial disclosure legislation is about making it all transparent. What is transparent about allowing developers to continue to use the side door and funnel big contributions and never have to disclose them?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very proud to say today that, with the legislation that was introduced yesterday by the minister, this will make us world leaders when it comes to transparency and accountability. They're

talking about what they claim to be a loophole. I would draw their attention to the loophole in the legislation that they introduced. They think it's perfectly acceptable to have donations of \$500 and less exempt from this qualification. We believe it's important that the people of Ontario have access to that information. That is the legislation that the minister introduced yesterday, and we're very proud of it.

Mr. Hampton: Well, the Toronto Star pointed out that this is a pretty nefarious loophole to allow someone to evade financial disclosure. In fact, someone named George Smitherman, commenting on the article, said, "We think there is too much money in Ontario politics, and we're very committed to reducing that." Then we see your legislation, and it permits exactly the kind of backdoor evasion that you were critical of.

Minister, I've got a simple question for you. We see the same sorts of things happening now that you used to criticize the Conservatives for, the same sorts of things where developers give big money and, presto, suddenly their development land isn't in the greenbelt any more. I think the people of Ontario deserve complete answers to this. Will you support a legislative committee to look at this from A to Z, the financial contributions and what land went into the greenbelt?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I would suggest that the leader of the third party read the bill that was introduced yesterday, because in the body of the bill there are provisions for a citizens' jury and the citizens' jury will be charged with reviewing election finances reform. So I would suggest to the member opposite that if he is serious about having the people of Ontario review the donation practices for political parties in the province of Ontario, he support this legislation immediately so that we can have a citizens' jury and look at reforms, perhaps the ones that the honourable member is speaking of.

But this legislation, in my opinion, responds to many of the questions—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm going to warn the member from Niagara Centre. The next time, it won't be a warning.

New question.

1510

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It concerns the greenbelt exemption to the developer in the city of Vaughan which, curiously, was just described by the Acting Premier as some sort of balance, some sort of quid pro quo. He didn't get his way in Pickering, but boy, oh, boy, he got one heck of a deal in the city of Vaughan, a \$15-million windfall.

Minister, the assembly is aware of the following facts: Despite your claims to the contrary, you had at least one secret meeting with developers, maybe more, including the developer in question. Ongoing meetings took place with your political staff. We found out today that at least

four meetings took place with the Premier's top political adviser, David MacNaughton. We know the developer in question attended a \$10,000-per-person soirée fundraiser. The neighbours didn't get an exemption, but this developer got an exemption big-time, a \$15-million windfall.

Surely, Minister, in light of these facts, you went back to your office last night and said to your staff, "Give me the science. I've got to answer the questions." Where's the science behind this particular exemption in the city of Vaughan in the finance minister's riding?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): As I mentioned earlier, as part of the consultation process, I met with the political leadership and the planning officials of the various regions and areas. In addition to that, we got two letters from the city of Vaughan, from the mayor of the city of Vaughan, dated November 20, in which he asks us not to put these lands in the greenbelt, and a letter dated January 28. In that letter, it states that the rural and agricultural lands proposed to be designated as greenbelt are of marginal agricultural quality and are fragmented to smaller landholders. Then he goes on to say, "We don't think that they should be in the greenbelt."

We then took this information—the ministry did—and went with the Ministry of Natural Resources, the science that was approved and suggested and developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and that was part of the Greenbelt Task Force recommendations. We took another look at these areas and determined that what really needed to be protected from a natural resource viewpoint were the waterways—the streams, the rivers, etc.—and that's what we did. We did exactly what the city of Vaughan wanted us to do, and it was confirmed by the science of the Ministry of Natural Resources. That's exactly what the consultation process is all about.

Mr. Hudak: The letters we've received from the city of Vaughan say something else entirely. We want the science. The minister claims that this plan is based on science.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'd like to hear the member from Erie-Lincoln's question.

Mr. Hudak: Surely the minister would have brought forward the detailed science, referenced a stream that was misplaced, a wetland that was misplaced, some way of demonstrating through the science that you claim is behind the greenbelt why this exemption was granted. You have failed to answer those questions despite two days of questions here in the assembly.

Minister, this is looking more like a greenbotch and not a greenbelt. It undermines your credibility; it undermines the credibility of the plan. Any minister worthy of the title would have gone back to his office, raised bloody hell, brought forth the science today and answered these questions. Minister, answer the questions. Produce the science today.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: The science that has been used by both the Ministry of Natural Resources and in the

LEAR system by the Ministry of Agriculture in fact was put in place by that party when they were in power, and we used the science to determine what should be protected from an agricultural viewpoint and what should be protected from a sensitive-environmental-lands viewpoint.

We followed that process here and elsewhere. We met with the municipal leadership, who after all are the elected councils for their particular areas and who are the people who speak on behalf of the public interest in that area. We took that information, we did exactly what the consultation process is all about, and I'm very pleased to report that we added an extra 8,500 acres of land to the greenbelt area as a result of the entire consultation process that has taken place over the last four or five months.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS AND SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, you've honoured International Women's Day by re-announcing money promised by the Tories to shelters and second-stage housing, to use for repairs. It's time for you to honour the promises you made to these groups and Ontario women.

Housing for women fleeing domestic violence is in scarce supply. As a result, women in shelters are forced to choose between returning to an abusive home or homelessness. You promised to reinstate core funding for second-stage housing programs, but you never kept that promise, and second-stage housing programs are now in even greater crisis.

I've talked to many of them, Minister, and so should you. They have a message for you: Please keep your promise. Today, on International Women's Day, will you finally listen to them and reinstate funding, as promised, to second-stage housing in this province?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I was very happy today to have a province-wide \$2-million announcement for our second-stage housing providers and shelters across the province. Some 98 agencies have benefited from new funding, not the last government's funding. The facts you have are simply incorrect. Yes, the last government provided \$8 million over five or six years for new shelters across the province, over the course of several years. This is new money, and the shelters and second-stage housing providers are well aware that it's new money. It is for refurbishing. It speaks to the security measures that some of these places need: in some cases, bullet-proof windows, enhanced security systems, better lighting; in some cases it's just fixing up the place, like any of us would do with our older homes.

These places have appreciated this. They appreciate the fact that the Ontario government has brought second-stage housing providers back into the fold for the first

time in many years. Does this sector need additional help? Of course they do. Are we working toward moving a step forward for women every day? Of course we are.

Ms. Churley: Minister, you're breaking your promise to second-stage housing. Just admit it. You said in the election, and before, that you weren't going to reinstate the odious policy made by the previous government, and you're doing it. Just admit it.

A lack of housing is another broken promise, and it's the prime reason women and their children return to an abusive home. A library of coroners' reports has said there needs to be more affordable housing so women don't have to make this terrible choice. But your government has not put any shovels in the ground to build the 20,000 affordable housing units you promised. Instead, you are holding up construction by not matching the \$300 million in federal funds. These stalling tactics are costing women and children the housing they need to be safe.

Minister, seize the day today. Keep your promise. Will you build this affordable housing? Will you announce that you're putting shovels in the ground today?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: My colleague, the minister responsible for infrastructure, is desperate to answer this question.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): A little over a year ago, I was with Andy Mitchell, the minister responsible for CMHC, and Toronto Mayor David Miller, and at that time we announced tens of millions of dollars for new affordable housing projects right across Ontario—in fact, so far, in a little over a year, some 3,400 units of affordable housing. I don't know where the member gets her facts from, but it's probably from the same research that indicates absolutely a lack of understanding about what we've done. In fact, I attended a groundbreaking just one month ago for a 230-unit affordable housing project. My colleague in London—

1520

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I think as one starts to address the other, colleagues and members don't want to hear the question. We're going to go to a new question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let's get some proper decorum in the House, please. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

WATER EXTRACTION AND QUALITY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Last Wednesday, thousands of farmers from across Ontario assembled here on the grounds of Queen's Park, and a lot of those people are constituents of mine. They came to express their concerns about issues like the BSE crisis, low commodity prices, environmental issues, farm incomes and support programs.

I walked out among those farmers and spoke to them, and I know you did the same. Some of the farmers I spoke with have expressed concerns about the \$750 application fee that accompanies the new water-taking regulations that were introduced earlier this year. They did not dispute the importance of protecting Ontario's water. As farmers and well owners, their livelihoods and personal health are dependent upon the availability of safe and clean water. However, they believe that the introduction of this fee amidst all their other business challenges now belies the government's commitment to address their concerns. Minister, what assurances can you give these farmers that the government's commitment to address their concerns includes re-examining the need for this application fee?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the demonstration we had last week by the farmers. I want to congratulate the organizers. They were able to make their points very succinctly and very peacefully.

I did have an opportunity to walk among them and hear their issues, and you're right: The permit to take water application fees was an issue. I know as well that the elected representatives of farm organizations have made that point with the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture.

I'm very happy that as a result of these meaningful consultations, I am able to say today that the Ministry of the Environment is going to cancel the application fees for farmers. We thank all of the farmers who assisted us in working toward this.

Mrs. Van Bommel: That is certainly great news, and I know the farmers in my constituency, and as a matter of fact all the farmers across the province, are very happy to hear that.

Minister, another issue, while I have your attention, is that I continue to hear—

Interjections.

Mrs. Van Bommel: I'm going to go for more.

Another issue that I hear a lot about from people in my riding is the potential impact of the drinking water systems regulation, regulation 170, that has an impact on community halls and small businesses in rural Ontario. The previous government introduced regulation 170 without consulting the people it would affect. Therefore, I know that you, as Minister of the Environment, ordered a review of regulation 170 last spring. That review included public consultations in 12 rural communities across Ontario last fall, and that included Chatham-Kent, which is in my riding. I know that you provided an update of the review of regulation 170 at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference in February. Can you update the members of the Legislature and the public in rural Ontario about this review of 170?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Indeed, I have heard a great deal about regulation 170. I've got a copy of that regulation, which was signed by Bob Runciman actually, and there's no question—I am very happy, though, that the Advisory Council On Drinking Water Quality was

able to provide its recommendations to me. We look forward in the near future to posting those regulations on the EBR. We have also received recommendations from the AMO-ROMA task force.

There is a common thread to many of the recommendations that have come. One of the key areas where we see some commonality is that the recommendations we are considering now will involve the public health units. We are going to consider that perhaps they can resume a greater role in providing testing services, particularly for community halls and small businesses, for which the cost of the water testing regimen that's in place now has been very prohibitive.

We look forward in the weeks ahead to working out a regulation that is going to be workable, particularly for people in rural Ontario. We're very appreciative of all the people who have helped us to build and improve this drastically flawed regulation.

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: The minister said that it was not proper—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'd like to hear the member from Erie-Lincoln's question.

Mr. Hudak: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: You said it was not proper for you to meet with developers during certain periods in the greenbelt consultations. Why, then, is it okay for your political staff and the Premier's top political adviser to do so?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Once again, I met with Mr. DeGasperis on May 4 last year, during the time the Greenbelt Task Force was setting up the criteria they reported on in August of last year. Following that time, I made a decision personally that I was not going to meet with any particular landowners within the greenbelt. I didn't do that. I met with their duly elected councils, with planners. I took various trips around to take a look at some of the areas.

We had 1,200 submissions from individuals, from municipalities, from different interest groups etc. They were all looked at by the ministry people, taking into account the science that was adopted both through the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture, to see whether or not we had the greenbelt right. I'm very pleased to report that at the end of the day we got it right, because we got over a million acres of land for permanent protection added to the 800,000—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hudak: A very puzzling answer, quite frankly, by the minister. I asked a very simple and direct question. If you set a standard that said it was improper for you to meet with developers during a certain time period, why then is it not improper for your political staff, your representatives, for the Premier's top political adviser, his principal secretary, Mr. David MacNaughton, to meet

with the developers? Why the double standard, and why are you avoiding this question?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I have no knowledge as to who else met with whom with respect to the greenbelt. I know that some of my staff people and some of the ministry people certainly met with the 1,200 people who made submissions to our greenbelt consultation process. Consultation is to make sure you've got it right, and I believe that the end result of this entire process is that we do have it right. We, as a matter of fact, added an additional 8,500 acres from the draft plan, the draft mapping, that was produced at the same time the legislation was introduced on October 28.

This is something future generations can be proud of. This is really all about the ag preserve. I would like to know where the Tories stand. Are they in favour of the greenbelt or not? They voted against it. Do they really want to pave over the ag preserve? Is that really what it's all about?

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In the absence of the Minister of Community and Social Services, my question is to the Acting Premier. Madam Acting Premier, today is International Women's Day. We've heard all of your lofty goals, we've heard your ideals, but what I want to hear is what you're not saying, and what you're not saying is that you're going to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. That's what you're not saying. There are 91,000 Ontario families affected by your non-action, and fully 60% of those, or 55,000, are led by single mothers.

If there was one thing you could do to help women in this province today, it would be to end that clawback. Today, on International Women's Day, will you show some integrity, will you show some action to your lofty words? Will you end the clawback?

1530

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I am very happy to report that the moment this government took office almost a year and a half ago, we immediately changed the policy. All new funding from the federal government through the national child benefit has been flowing directly to families in this province. The total in that first year was \$7 million.

What we acknowledge is that we have a \$200-million issue. We are one of eight provinces across the country that continue to claw this back from that initial allotment from the federal government. We know this. We also understand that we were not delivered a balanced budget like we were promised by the last government. That has had a huge effect on the amount of time it takes for us to deliver on everything we want to do for families in Ontario.

So let me be clear: The moment we took office, we changed that policy, so that funding is flowing through to families. We hope we can continue to do that. As we move forward, we take a step forward every day in helping families that need help in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member for Hamilton East.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The bottom line, Madam Minister, is that where I live in Hamilton, eight out of 10 single mothers with children under six are living in poverty. They're going hungry because you claw back their child benefit supplement by \$122 per child every month, enough to keep those poor families from going to the food bank. How can you claim to be an advocate for women when you continue to discriminate against women in our province who are living in poverty? You promised to end this clawback. You broke your promise. Women and children need to eat.

New Democrats today are calling for an immediate end to your clawback. Will you advocate for children? Will you agree? Will you end it now?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I think it is not a fair characterization of the significant work we have done for a year and a half; in a very short time, let me tell you. For the first time, families—including in Hamilton, as this member has mentioned—have benefited by \$57 million of federal child care money finally going into child care to help all families, especially moms and children in this province; millions more dollars in nutrition programs, in breakfast programs—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Nepean–Carleton, I'm going to warn you this time: Allow the minister to respond to the question.

Minister?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: One of the first things we did was reinstate the nutritional supplement for moms who are on welfare, something that never should have been taken away. In addition, we have funded healthy babies programs like never before: millions of dollars in breakfast programs to feed children across this province. We have made a 3% increase to families on welfare and ODSP. It's not enough, but we know it's a start. We have continued from day one to change some very difficult policies in this ministry to make life better for people who need it. I stand on that record, and I will continue to work for the—

The Speaker: Thank you.

HYDRO PROJECT

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Energy. For quite some time, my constituents in Markham have been extremely concerned with regard to Hydro One's proposal to run high-voltage transmission lines through high-density residential areas. Many people, including municipal councils, school boards and residents, have raised these concerns, and I support them 100%. As you are aware, I have raised

these very concerns with the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky; the Minister of Education; and with your staff at the Ministry of Energy. I have been asking, on behalf of the people of Markham, that a proper examination of more feasible long-term alternatives take place. It is also imperative that a responsible process be implemented to ensure that any and all health and environmental implications are addressed. Hydro One has demonstrated reluctance in examining possible alternative solutions to the energy demands of York region and in addressing the concerns of my constituents. Minister, is the government prepared to look at alternatives to Hydro One's proposal—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Minister of Energy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for the question and for the hard work he's done for the last year, advocating on behalf of the people of Markham.

Under Bill 100, we have given the Ontario Power Authority the ability to do regional plans as well. Accordingly, the Ontario Power Authority and the Ontario Energy Board are beginning a process to review the electricity needs of York region. The process will survey a variety of options for the region. I expect the OPA will consult, but, most importantly, I can tell the member that Hydro One has informed me that it is withdrawing its application to the Ministry of the Environment, pending the outcome of the OPA's review. I know the member will want to assure his constituents that the process that's set up will allow them to have fair hearing to be heard on a range of issues, and will allow York region to look at things other than transmission lines, including distributed generation.

Mr. Wong: Minister, that is great news for the people of Markham. I have listened to the people in my riding and have worked to bring forward their legitimate concerns. The people of Markham are entitled to know that their community's energy needs will be met, without having to sacrifice their health or that of their children or environmental safety. I have consulted with many of my constituents and a number of groups that are concerned about these very issues, and I have committed to ensuring that their concerns are heard and addressed.

As you know, I have raised our concerns over the failure to examine alternative options to the Hydro One proposal on numerous occasions, and I am pleased to hear that these options will now be explored.

Minister, can you tell me and the people of Markham what specifically the mandate of the OPA will be with regard to examining the power needs of York region?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The OPA's broad mandate is to be responsible for ensuring long-term adequacy of supply of electricity, including medium- and long-term demand and supply forecasting, conservation and load management. The OPA will assess the electricity needs of York region and provide the Ontario Energy Board with recommendations on how to meet these needs. This process will look at transmission options and generation options,

including distributed generation and demand-side management. It's anticipated to take about 10 months.

I want to thank the member for his very passionate representations on behalf of his constituents that will allow us to have a better look at what the future needs of Markham and York region are with respect to power. He deserves an enormous amount of credit for the hard work he did on this file.

GREENBELT

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You ask us to trust you that the greenbelt borders are based on the best science and the best planning advice that was available, even though you cannot provide any real science. You ask us to believe that the greenbelt boundary has been drawn fairly and impartially, yet we find you are holding meetings with developers about the greenbelt after you said you would not.

Minister, this is not the first time you have asked us to trust you. On September 20 of last year, I questioned you in committee about new powers your Planning Act changes would give to the cabinet and you to intervene in OMB planning decisions. What was your response? You told the committee, "I, for one, certainly don't intend to abuse" these new powers.

Minister, when you said that, I took you at your word. Now we find out you are meeting with developers when you said you wouldn't, and that boundary lines can be changed with no basis. Will your government call a full legislative—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Could I explain the rules again. When I do stand up as the Speaker, I would require that the members sit down; therefore, your time for the question is over because I have given a minute in which to ask the question. I know that if we stop giving speeches and ask the question, it may be more helpful.

Minister?

1540

Hon. John Gerretsen: I have great respect for the member opposite and all the work she does. But let me just say this: The science that has been used was recommended to us by the Greenbelt Task Force. They specifically talked about what systems should be put into place to determine the limitations of the greenbelt through environmental protection rules, agricultural rules, natural resources rules, culture, recreation and tourism rules and transportation infrastructure rules. We used that. We used the best possible scientific information that was developed by them when they were in government, by both the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture.

We did that and, yes, there were some boundary lines changed with respect to the greenbelt. For example, the headwaters of the various streams and rivers were included as part of the naturally protected area. That's

what the greenbelt is based on and that generations in the future will thank us for preserving for them.

The Speaker: The member from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Minister, I just want to say that nobody believes you. You're trying to leave behind an environmental legacy called the greenbelt in your one-term government, and what you're probably going to leave behind is an environmental scandal of the worst kind in Ontario history.

Minister, it appears that what we do know—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I would like to hear the member from Simcoe-Grey. I'd ask the minister—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of the Environment and others have been quite boisterous and I cannot hear what the member from Simcoe-Grey is saying. Would you put your supplementary?

Mr. Wilson: Minister, we know you haven't produced the science and you're refusing to do so. We know that if a developer has a meeting with you and then drops \$10,000 into the pockets of the Liberal Party of Ontario and meets with the Premier and the finance minister, you get your worthless piece of land worth \$15 million overnight. The maps change overnight.

This has the smell of scandal. You have the integrity and honesty of your government at heart here. Why won't you call a full legislative inquiry and get rid of the impression that your government can be bought?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As I mentioned before, the meeting I had with Mr. DeGasperis was well before we even started the greenbelt process because we hadn't received the Greenbelt Task Force report yet. The ministry didn't start working on that until some time in July or August, months after this meeting took place. The meeting specifically took place because he wanted us to remove the agricultural preserve from our commitment in our platform during the election campaign. He did not want us to honour that commitment. He wanted to see that land developed and we said, "No, the agricultural preserve is going to be preserved for farmland." Not only that, we went one step further and put it into the greenbelt to make sure that it is protected for generations to come.

I would like to know, what is John Tory's position on that? Does he want the agricultural preserve or not? That's what I'd like to know. What's their position on that?

LABOUR UNIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Labour: Wal-Mart is the most anti-union boss in North America. It will go to any length to destroy unions in its workplaces and deny its workers the right to freely, collectively bargain as members of a trade union. You know that a strong, clear majority of the working women and men at Wal-Mart in Windsor have signed union cards joining up with the United Food and Commercial

Workers Union. You also know that Wal-Mart will go to any length to attack, undermine and destroy their union bid. When a clear, strong majority has signed union cards, like those women and men at Wal-Mart, why won't you let them take advantage of card certification to organize into a labour union?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): As the member knows, the Minister of Labour would not be commenting on any matter that is before the board. What I am pleased to report is that in the amendments that we have introduced in the Labour Relations Amendment Act, there are two amendments that apply to all workers to ensure—not commenting on this case—that the process of a worker choosing whether or not to be a member of a union will be absolutely scrupulous and fair.

Those two amendments, applicable to all workers, are, first, remedial certification: For those cases in which an employer seriously breaches the Labour Relations Act and removes the workers' effective right to choose, and for which there is no other remedy, the board would have the power, if these amendments are passed, of certifying the union. Second, there is an interim reinstatement power to ensure that if a worker is disciplined or fired because of their involvement in a union organizing drive, the board would have the power to reinstate them on an interim basis to ensure that the process is fair.

Mr. Kormos: Wal-Mart will go to any length to undermine union organization in its workplaces. We've already seen them shut down stores to deny workers their right to freely collectively bargain as members of a trade union.

Card-based certification is hardly a radical proposal. It was the law in Ontario for decades under NDP, Liberal and Conservative governments. You're prepared to give it to construction trades workers, but you exclude retail and other sector workers, showing absolute contempt for those working women and men. And I tell you, in the retail sector, they're mostly women, mostly new Canadians and, in places like Wal-Mart, at some of the lowest possible wages.

Minister, please show the courage that workers expect and restore the laws that even existed under Bill Davis. Why don't you pass NDP Bill 151 and give all workers in Ontario the same right to join a union with the same process?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I thank the member for the supplementary. We look forward to his support of the labour relations amendment act, which will ensure fair and balanced legislation in the province of Ontario.

We're actually very proud of our legislative record to date for assisting women, for assisting all workers, for assisting the most vulnerable workers in Ontario. Whether it's the first two minimum wage increases in nine years, the family medical leave legislation, the end of the 60-hour workweek—the list could go on—we're very proud of our record in assisting all workers in the province—women, the most vulnerable—in ensuring a fairer workplace system in Ontario.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member for Oak Ridges has a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I rise on a point of order pursuant to standing order 97(d).

You will recall that on March 1, I brought a matter to your attention. At that time, there were seven specific questions that I had put forward to the Minister of Education. There was an undertaking on that day by the House leader—I refer to Hansard—in which he rose and made the statement, "It is my understanding that those questions will be tabled today."

Speaker, to this day, I have only received two of the seven responses. I appeal to you again to use your authority to ensure that the Minister of Education complies with the standing orders of this House. I don't know on what basis the House leader undertook and committed that those would be delivered that day, but it hasn't happened.

Interjection.

The Speaker: My understanding is that all the questions have been responded to. Maybe you might check with the—

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Check the Orders and Notices.

1550

PETITIONS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition that's entitled "Protect Our Farmers."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to the lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis, and will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9th;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deal with the serious issue of farm income, as brought forward by the Rural Revolution resolutions to respect property and prosperity, as follows:

"Federal and provincial governments have created—"

Interjections.

Mr. Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I can't hear—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I also want respect to be extended to the member who is reading the petition.

Interjections.

The Speaker: It seems to me that neither the member from Durham nor the Minister of Agriculture and Food wants to hear that. I'd like some silence in which I could hear the member from Oxford and his petition.

Mr. Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for bringing order to the House. This was the same problem the farmers on the lawn said, that the minister did a lot more speaking than listening.

"Federal and provincial governments have created a bureaucratic environment that legalizes the theft of millions of dollars for rural businesses and farm income. All money found to be removed from the rural land-owners, farmers and businesses shall be returned."

I affix my signature to this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): My petition is from the residents of my riding of Niagara Falls.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, request that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Another group of petitions from the Huronia Regional Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to these.

WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I appreciate, on International Women's Day, introducing a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of the Women's Health Care Centre in Peterborough.

"The women's health centre supports raped and physically abused women, nursing mothers and women going through menopause. It also provides physical exams for women and information on family planning. The closing of this facility would leave a void that is not filled by any other service in Peterborough.

"We, the undersigned, feel that the Women's Health Centre of Peterborough, Ontario, is vital to our community and should not have its funding cut...."

I'll put my signature on this petition.

MUNICIPAL JURISDICTION

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This petition relates to municipal powers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis due to lost property rights and a crushing regulatory burden, and they will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9th;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider the issue of municipal jurisdiction brought forward by the Rural Revolution's resolutions to respect property and prosperity as follows:

"Resolution number 5: Municipal governments shall be constituted to take control and jurisdiction over matters that pertain to their constituents.

"Resolution number 9: All municipalities forced or coerced with amalgamations shall hold a binding referendum on de-amalgamation at the next general election."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

Thank you for allowing me to present this petition.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Protect Individual Rights."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis due to lost prosperity, property rights and crushing regulatory burdens on rural Ontarians and will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9th;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address the issues of respecting property rights as in the Rural Revolution's resolutions to respect property rights and prosperity as follows:

"Resolution number 1: The right to own, use, enjoy, and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy.

"Resolution number 2: Private property shall not be rezoned, redesignated or reclassified in any manner that limits the natural and private use of property without fair and timely compensation.

"Resolution number 7: The proposed greenbelt legislation shall be amended to respect property rights as mentioned in resolutions 1 and 2.

"Resolution number 11: All entry on to private lands by government officials shall only be conducted with the informed consent of the property owner or under the authority of a search warrant."

I am pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham who feel their rights are threatened.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, has given me a petition that I am pleased to present.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I've affixed my signature as well. Page Jason from south St. Catharines is taking that to the Clerks' table.

1600

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 20% of the adult population, or 1.8 million adults in Ontario, continue to smoke; and

"Whereas hospitality concepts like bars, pubs, taverns, nightclubs, Legions, bingo halls, racetracks and casinos are businesses with a high percentage of patrons who smoke; and

"Whereas more than 700 businesses in Ontario have invested tens of thousands of dollars each to construct a designated smoking room to comply with municipal bylaws;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Permit properly ventilated and separated designated smoking rooms in hospitality establishments that regulate and control employee and customer exposure to second-hand smoke."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 7, 2005, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Kennedy has moved second reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1600 to 1610.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kennedy, Gerard
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Parsons, Ernie

Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Nays

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 20.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Mr Kennedy moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 7, 2005, I am required to now put the question. Is it the pleasure of the house that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have just received a notice from the chief government whip that the vote will be deferred until Wednesday, March 9, at the time of deferred votes.

PLACES TO GROW ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES ZONES DE CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 7, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 136, An Act respecting the establishment of growth plan areas and growth plans / Projet de loi 136, Loi sur l'établissement de zones de croissance planifiée et de plans de croissance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to join in this debate for about 20 minutes this afternoon on Bill 136, which is the Liberal government's Places to Grow legislation. It's a shame that this legislation is a compendium to the greenbelt legislation, Bill 135. It's being brought forward at a time when there are allegations of scandal around this whole greenbelt and how the maps were drawn. We've been raising it in the Legislature over the past few days. The government refuses to have a full legislative inquiry to get to the bottom and to clear the air

of how at least one developer can have his 100-acre parcel of land put in the original maps by the Liberal government, put in the greenbelt, meaning he can't develop that land, yet once that developer makes the rounds of some senior Liberal people—cabinet ministers, the Premier and the finance minister—and puts \$10,000 into the pockets of the Ontario Liberal Party at a \$10,000-a-plate dinner at Greg Sorbara's brother's house, lo and behold, his land comes out of the greenbelt. It's exempt from the greenbelt, and its value goes from zero—it can't be developed—

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to remember the tradition of the House, which is to refer to other members of the House by either their riding name or their ministry name.

Mr. Wilson: The land's worth nothing when it's put in the greenbelt plan originally. As I said, this particular developer admits he made the rounds. He talked to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Later he went to a \$10,000-a-plate dinner at the finance minister's brother's house, along with the Premier. According to his own admission, the developer says that he got his land exempt. It goes from useless and devalued—a nice environmental piece of land to look at, but you can't develop it in the original greenbelt plan—to being worth about, we estimate, some \$15 million. That's quite an investment, when you can pop \$10,000 into the Liberal coffers and end up with almost a \$15-million net return.

This bill is clouded by this whole discussion, and we call upon the government again to have a full legislative inquiry. You can have reduced terms of reference, you can put a time limit on it, but I think it's only fair to the Liberals in this province, actually, that if this greenbelt was going to be their environmental legacy—seven ministers were present when they originally announced the legislation. This is what Premier McGuinty wants his government, in this term—and I think they are going to be a one-term government—to be remembered for, and yet we have all of these problems and allegations that are putting a real taint on what could be a very good process, on what could be a very good legacy for the province.

1620

The fact of the matter is, the bill will be remembered as a scandal unless they get to the bottom, and the only way to clear the air is to have an all-party committee, a full legislative committee, so that that committee itself isn't tainted, there is representation from all the parties, and we can figure out who drew the lines.

We've got one of the mayors who was chair of the task force saying he made recommendations but he suspects the lines were changed in the Premier's office. We've got the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing changing his story all the time. One day he has talked to the developer; the next day he hasn't talked to the developer; then the time frame changes on when he talked to the developer. All we know is that at the end of the day there was a piece of land in the greenbelt and, lo and behold, \$10,000 later, it comes out of the greenbelt and it's worth \$15 million.

This particular legislation is similar to the Smart Growth panels and the Smart Growth plan that our government was working on before the people of Ontario decided that we needed a rest on the opposition side of this House. It hasn't been a rest at all. This government didn't have its traditional honeymoon. Usually the first year and a half or so isn't so bad for a government, but they've had a terrible time. I think the Conservatives along with the NDP have done a very good job in opposition of pointing out many of the flaws in the government plans.

The fact of the matter is, this particular legislation has some flaws. At least we don't see in the Places to Grow book, which I reread again last night—as transportation critic, there is no transportation plan.

I'm talking on behalf of the riding in central Ontario that's probably the most affected by this legislation. I think down in the Niagara area it will have a huge effect with the greenbelt and Places to Grow. But with the leapfrog effect, with the Oak Ridges moraine frozen and with the greenbelt map as it is today, all the development then leapfrogs up to north of Highway 9—my riding goes south to Highway 9—and it starts in the Beaton-Bond Head-West Gwillimbury-Bradford area and it creeps up to—Places to Grow recognizes Barrie as one of the 25 urban communities that is trying to achieve 40% intensification.

The fact of the matter is, we have huge development pressures right now. I want to remind the government, while you did, in your final map for the greenbelt, move the boundaries to include more of the Holland Marsh, and I commend you for that, what's wrong with the land on the other side of Highway 9? It's the best potato land in Ontario. It's the potato capital of Ontario. If you're going to follow through, you're going to have to help those municipalities where there is tremendous development pressure right now.

We know we have to have development. I agree with the government, because they are following our Smart Growth plans, that we need to control that development. But at the end of the day, you have done two things wrong, that I can see, with the greenbelt.

One thing is that you didn't compensate farmers for the land you're taking away from them or devaluing. It's hurting them right now with their bank managers. I'm going to talk more about this in a few minutes, but tomorrow thousands of farmers are again expected to land on the front lawn of this Legislature, this time sponsored by the Lanark Landowners' Association. Randy Hillier is the president of that, and he has made it very clear that these farmers are as angry as the 6,000 farmers who were here last year—last week.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order 23(b)(i) suggests that my colleague across the hall should address the topic under discussion. As important as farming issues may be, it's not the bill.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Simcoe-Grey to continue.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your ruling.

I said the farmers who were here last year; I meant the farmers who were here last week.

This whole bill, Bill 136, Places to Grow—I say to the honourable member across the way, where are you going to grow? You’re going to grow in Simcoe–Grey, I assume by your own maps, particularly around Barrie, Bradford, Alliston and Collingwood. Your bill deals with controlling that growth, but your first step in trying to buy people into this process, I’m trying to argue, has been horrible. You have angry farmers whose land has been devalued as a result of the compendium legislation—Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation—which you’ve already passed in this House. They’re madder than heck, and tomorrow, apparently, they’re not going to take it any more.

In fact, Randy Hillier is quoted in the Brantford Expositor of March 4 as saying of the Lanark Landowners’ Association, “The lambs were in to Queen’s Park yesterday,”—referring to last week’s near-riot on the front yard—“the lions will be there next week,” referring to tomorrow’s demonstration. In the article, when asked by the reporter what he plans to do, he says there’s going to be a big surprise. So I would encourage people to stay tuned tomorrow. I don’t want to incite any violence and I don’t think they’ll be violent, but the Lanark Landowners’ Association and the thousands of farmers who will come here will give a very clear message to this government, as last week’s group did.

Bill 136, this very bill, is on their list of 11 resolutions, which I will read in. They don’t like the greenbelt because you didn’t compensate farmers. I haven’t had the time to do the full history, but I did live in Ottawa for three years when I worked for the Honourable Perrin Beatty for three years, and I recall the stories there when the greenbelt around Ottawa began to be bought up in the 1970s by the National Capital Commission. I believe that in today’s dollars it’s about \$1 billion. But the federal government did spend the money to compensate people. John Baird, the member for Nepean–Carleton, indicates that one of their family farms was “confiscated,” as he says, because he says his father—it was either his father or his grandfather—never felt that they got enough money, but at least the government did do fair market value and bought out the farmers with the Ottawa greenbelt.

We argued that that should be done with this greenbelt. It is a significant move forward in the environmental history of this province, I’ll grant you that, but it’s going to breed a lot of resentment. We’ve heard from our NDP colleagues that this greenbelt is, as the member for Toronto–Danforth called it yesterday, the floating greenbelt. People are under the impression that this greenbelt was put in legislation. No; the legislation enabled the planners and developers and whoever else had their hands in drawing the maps to draw the maps, but the actual maps aren’t part of the legislation; they can be changed by future governments through regulation and a

process that, so far—the process that this government has set up—isn’t transparent.

So if we don’t get to the bottom of this alleged scandal now, things are going to get worse because every day developers are going to come in and say, “If that guy paid \$10,000 and he was able to get his land out,” then surely to God they’ll be trying to find ways to do that for themselves to get their land out. I wouldn’t blame individual farm owners in trying to find ways to get their land exempt, given that it has been devalued in a very unfair way.

Secondly, the money isn’t in place with respect to this Places to Grow legislation. We had set aside \$1.25 billion for what we called the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships program, which was our down-payment to at least get public transit and some new roads and highways expanded in the province in those areas where we expected, under Smart Growth, that we would see intensification and greater urbanization in places like Barrie.

The fact of the matter is, this government has put nothing forward. There has been no new road built in this province in the last 18 months—none announced; nothing expanded. In fact, they cancelled Highway 26 in Collingwood. We’re still waiting for an answer on that. I want to thank Terry Geddes, the mayor of Collingwood, and Ellen Anderson-Noel, whom I met with here at Queen’s Park this morning, for their championing of Highway 26 along with myself. That’s a really sad story, and it indicates that the government isn’t willing to put its money where its legislation is. It indicates that the government has no transportation plan; what they’ve done with the greenbelt is actually contrary—I only took two planning courses at the University of Toronto, but both of them said that by this time, certainly by the year 2000, we were all to work near our homes, we were supposed to walk to work and to be able to shop, and our cars would be relics in a garage.

1630

The fact of the matter is that the greenbelt, for my riding, means that some 40,000 cars a day have to drive through the greenbelt to come to their jobs in Toronto—all that smog, all that pollution. All this does is say, “There’ll be no jobs in the Vaughan area; there’ll be no jobs where everything’s frozen.” You have to live in Barrie, you have to live in Orillia, you have to live in Collingwood, but there’s no economic plan for the province to put a plant up there anywhere. In fact, we just had four closures in Collingwood since you guys came in.

The fact of the matter is, we’re all going to have to get in our cars. There’s no public transit. You haven’t even got the GO train to Barrie yet, which is something you promised. Surely to goodness we had laid the groundwork for that. You could have not just announced it in your first 16 months; you could have actually done it by now. The tracks are there. You could actually have done it.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): That’s silly.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal says, "That's silly." You could have actually done it by now. GO Transit is ready to go. I've talked to them as transportation critic, and I don't know what the holdup is. The fact of the matter is, there's no public transit from where you want people to live to where their jobs are. There's no prospect right now, given that—we'll talk tonight on interim supply. We'll talk about our uncompetitive tax rates and the huge tax increase this government brought in in its first budget, discouraging employment in this province.

Contrary to good planning—and I've been to a lot of seminars with this government, where they're trying to convince me that this greenbelt is the way to go—they've left a lot of pieces out. I'm afraid that this environmental legacy they're trying to leave is going to fall flat, people will resent it and they'll all be looking for exemptions, as at least one developer has done, because they are simply fed up with the process. They don't think it's fair. There's no compensation. At the end of the day, it's going to be a black mark perhaps on the environmental history of this province.

I want to read from the Agromart Group and Cardinal Farm Supply Ltd., which is located on Tottenham Road in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. It's from Wayne Hawke, the general manager. I think it gives the best overview that I've seen as to why farmers are coming here tomorrow, why they're not thrilled with this legislation: the lack of compensation, the lack of coherent transportation plans, the lack of response to the farm crisis, the lack of jobs in rural Ontario, the pressure that is now being put on by the banks because the greenbelt devalued the farmers' land. It says:

"Re: Farm financial crisis requires your urgent attention," and "urgent" is in capital letters.

"Dear Mr. Wilson....

"Cardinal Farm Supply Ltd. is a farm supply and service centre serving the crop input needs of farmers in Simcoe county. We are part of the Agromart Group ... a chain of retail crop input supply centres in Ontario, with almost 300 full-time rural employees working out of 30 locations. We depend directly on the viability of the agricultural sector to support our families. Our farmer-customers are in a severe financial crisis, and all the businesses that rely on farmers are at risk as well. We need your help and support to move this crisis to the top of the Liberal government's agenda immediately.

"We would first like to state that we fully support the position taken by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and many of the other farm organizations. As farmers, they are in the best position to make the specific recommendations required to resolve this crisis. We ask that you listen to their concerns and address the issues with energy and resolve.

"The complexity of the crisis is related to cyclical commodity prices (grains and oilseed prices at 25-year lows), our high dollar, rising fuel and other input costs, market-distorting subsidies and support provided in other jurisdictions, the cumulative impact of the BSE crisis and

other trade issues (e.g. duties on hogs exported to the US), and new government regulations"—listen up here, government—"such as the source water protection act, the Nutrient Management Act and the Greenbelt Protection Act, to name a few. Our tobacco producers also need financial help by receiving the government aid already promised by the Liberal government." He goes on to say that a good overview of the issues can be found at the OFA Web site.

"None of these issues are in direct control of Ontario food producers. They are among the most efficient in the world and yet, through no fault of their own, their immediate financial viability is in jeopardy. The public benefits directly from our farmers' production efficiency, but yet the government representing the public fails to support them.

"In our business, we see many signs of the crisis and how it may play out if government intervention is insufficient. Our customers are involved in a rising number of 'farm debt mediation' proceedings. Farmers are re-financing their businesses by extending the amortization period of their long-term debt and are requesting increased supplier credit. We observe the banks pulling away from agriculture and many solid, well-managed farm operators having great difficulty in settling their accounts with us in an orderly and timely fashion.

"The spring is rapidly approaching, and many farmers could have difficulty sourcing the credit they need to plant a crop.

"The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for an emergency meeting with Premier McGuinty and Minister Peters, without a response (as of this date)." The letter is dated February 22. "We find it difficult to understand why the government has been so unresponsive, and understand the level of frustration our customers are experiencing."

Finally it says, "We ask that you make the commitment to become informed about the issues and champion the 'farm financial crisis' cause with your fellow MPPs, the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier. We are asking you to become a part of the solution. Our customers, the farmers and food producers of this province, are depending on you."

I want to thank Wayne Hawke, the general manager of Cardinal Farm Supply Ltd. near Tottenham, for that. That's probably the best letter I've had in 15 years, and one of the saddest letters. It's one of the best business letters in terms of the case made, but one of the saddest letters.

You and I, Mr. Speaker, were both elected in 1990. We go to all of our farm MPP commitments every year. This year, Mr. Dunlop and I were at Steve Halls's farm in Adjala-Tosorontio for the annual Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture meeting with MPs, MPPs and local elected officials. I attended the 64th annual meeting of the Grey County Federation of Agriculture. I have had dozens of meetings with farmers. Thousands appeared here last week; thousands will appear here tomorrow. The farm community is in crisis. This bill doesn't help

them. This bill aggravates them. This bill puts more planning, more pressure, more regulations on them. I hope the government will deal with the farm crisis before moving and trying to put this environmental legacy, which Bill 136 is part of, in place.

The Lanark Landowners' Association is going to a lot of bother and a lot of work to have this demonstration tomorrow and neither the Premier nor the Minister of Agriculture will be attending. They've said that in the newspapers today. That is awful. In fact, Mr. Peters went out of his way in the last 24 hours to personally cut up Randy Hillier, the chair of the Lanark Landowners' Association, and said that he would only deal with "legitimate farm organizations." I dare him to go out there tomorrow and repeat that. He's too chicken. He's already told the newspaper that he's not going to do that. Shame on him.

This letter from Cardinal Farm Supply asks that the government listen. I'm doing my part by trying to bring these issues to the government's attention. The government needs to respond. You're elected to represent all the people of Ontario, even if you don't like the fact that they're exercising their right to protest.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thank you kindly, Speaker. I am pleased to have seen you, sitting as Speaker, acknowledge that the word "chicken," when applied to another member, is indeed not unparliamentary. You have reinforced precedent today. Speaker Arnott, you will be cited from now till forever in Parliaments throughout the British Commonwealth or the former British Empire for the fact that the word "chicken," when applied to another member, not just to imply but to outright state cowardice, gutlessness—you have made it clear that it is parliamentary. I thank you. After all, what do we have but words to duel with here? The reason we have words to duel with is we don't want to be doing it with swords. My goodness.

I'm going to be speaking to this bill in a few minutes' time. I'm going to have but 20 minutes to speak to the bill and I regret that. So I'm going to make the best of the 20 minutes I've got. I've got some things to say because this bill does some very dangerous things, not only to rural Ontario but to small-town Ontario too, like the kind of communities I come from, communities like Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St. Catharines, Port Colborne and, heck, all the way down to Wainfleet and through to Fort Erie. Mayors, councils and residents of those small towns should be awfully concerned about what this government is doing to their future. I tell you, this government has been of little comfort to those small towns, small towns like Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St. Catharines, Fort Erie and Port Colborne and, yes, Wainfleet too. This bill is of no comfort to them either.

Just as farmers have had occasion now two weeks in a row to come here in the thousands, there will be points in time not too far into the future when small-town Ontarians will be here too, because they've learned to understand that Dalton McGuinty thinks the province of

Ontario begins and ends at the intersection of Yonge and Bloor.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

1640

Mr. Parsons: Thank you, Speaker. I'm large enough that I'm hard to ignore, so I'm rather flattered by that.

I am pleased to speak to this bill. In my years of training as an engineer, I took one planning course, which is probably enough just to make me dangerous, but it did give me an appreciation of the need to plan ahead. In the next 30 years we are looking at four million more people in Ontario. We're looking at two million more jobs. We need to be prepared.

We can look at some countries in the world where there isn't planning taking place. We know that once a building is built, once the ground is paved, it's going to be that way forever, so we need to look ahead. I think there is an important role for government—and this bill is appropriate—that we do some of the planning.

Municipalities certainly have a strong role in this, but municipalities have artificial boundaries from one to the next. We need to look at much more of a global picture and area picture. I think it's significant that the first area where planning is going to be done is the Golden Horseshoe area, because the boundaries are artificial. We need to have a role for the provincial government to carry the planning from one to the next.

There is an ever-widening split between rural and urban Ontario. It is not intentional on anyone's part, but the reality is that housing is sometimes not a really compatible neighbour with a farm. When you see housing being located in rural areas, it will ultimately force a farmer to not be able to construct an additional barn or addition because of certain minimum setbacks.

This bill will provide a role for the minister to make decisions after extensive consultation with people in the community and with municipalities. It will bring the parties together. That doesn't happen everywhere. In my own riding, we have Belleville, Quinte West and Prince Edward county that have come together to do things. That's unusual, and I compliment them for it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to respond to my colleague Jim Wilson from Simcoe-Grey. He brought up some excellent points on the Places to Grow Act, Bill 136. What caught my attention was when he started talking about the agricultural community and how they've been left out of this overall process. He started talking about the fact that there are a couple of demonstrations: the one last week from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the one tomorrow from the Lanark Landowners' Association. I thought that we in this province had the right to come to Queen's Park to demonstrate and that the appropriate people—ministers, the Premier, critics—would have an opportunity to go out and shake hands with the folks outside, talk to

them, listen to their concerns and maybe have a few of them into our offices here.

I just came from a scrum outside a few minutes ago where I heard the Minister of Agriculture fiercely putting down the efforts of the Lanark Landowners' Association. He said that they did not represent the farmers in Ontario. I found that disgusting, to say the least. They have a right to be here. They have a right to demonstrate.

We've had a number of organizations, a number of stakeholder groups, who have come to Queen's Park in the past and have demonstrated. They represented different unions, different federations, and the Lanark Landowners are no different. Whether you agree with their principles or you don't agree with their principles and policies, that's their right.

I, for one, believe that Simcoe county will have a lot of representation here tomorrow. I'm not saying that, because they come under the umbrella of the Lanark Landowners' Association, they don't exist. These are people in my riding who are having a very difficult time with what has happened to them as a result of the efforts of this government. I will be standing outside with my constituents tomorrow, representing them, with the Lanark Landowners' Association.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm so delighted to have a chance to comment on the member's speech. I disagree with much of what the member said, although I do want to acknowledge the work that former ministers like Chris Hodgson did as far as bringing this forward and knitting together a coalition of municipal, industry and environmental leaders. I want to acknowledge the work of the New Democratic Party and of Anne Golden's task force. I want to acknowledge the work of Les Frost and Bill Davis. I want to acknowledge the work of academics, business leaders and environmental leaders, who all worked to cobble together a vision and a plan to make it happen.

I want to extend an invitation to the member to offer constructive advice and comments. If there is truly a belief that we can strengthen our ability to settle people, to support jobs and the economy, I want this member and all members to know that our government is prepared to work with any responsible individual who wants to see things furthered.

In fact, I had the opportunity to attend eight town hall meetings with some 1,600 Ontario residents. I was up in Barrie, in fact, back in the summer, to talk about our vision and our concept for Places to Grow. We received enormous support, whether it was from people in the member's riding, some local landowners or some of the municipal politicians—absolutely incredible to see that kind of synergy and to tap into that kind of wisdom.

I know the member would want to be fair in his comments and acknowledge the lengths to which our government has gone to engage the citizens of Ontario in developing a comprehensive and a genuine, true vision for this province, which includes all the various com-

munities, be they urban or rural. I know the member is fair-minded. I know he supports the goals of this. Of course, as a good opposition member, he's pointing out some very obvious areas from his perspective.

The Acting Speaker: I turn to the member for Simcoe-Grey. You have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Wilson: I hate to take on the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal in any way, because I'm generally begging him to support projects in my riding. I have the list here. They range from the Fenwick Bridge replacement in the municipality of Grey Highlands to the renewal of aging and deteriorating sanitary sewers in the town of Collingwood and to the expansion of water and sewer services to connect all citizens to municipal systems in the town of Wasaga Beach.

Clearview township has five community halls. You know, you'd be a hero in rural Ontario, I say to the honourable minister and his government, if you'd deal with this community hall issue, which was the result of regulations that came out of Walkerton to improve and bring up to standards the water systems in our community halls.

Just imagine what a small amount of money would do—and I've argued this so many times in this House—and how many church groups, small villages, rural areas and small towns would be so happy if you'd just put your money where your mouth is and actually do something.

We've got people in the village of Angus in the township of Essa who are going to have to pay over \$6,000 for their water hookup because we can't seem to get any money out of the provincial government at this stage. So I hope you'll look at the Angus water treatment plant upgrades and expansion favourably.

The town of New Tecumseth has a whole pile of road upgrades. The town of the Blue Mountains has the extension of water and sanitary sewer services. I know you've spoken personally to Her Worship Ellen Anderson about that. I appreciate your meeting with her, she's a big fan of yours. I met with her this morning. But she's really hoping—finally, I want to say, the township of Springwater, the Finlay Mill Road bridge rehab project.

Minister, it's nice to have meetings, but you don't indicate to the mayors at those meetings when you're going to announce the money. If you want to be cutting ribbons by the time of the next election, in 2007, you've got to get the projects going now. So I plead with you: If you're going to do Places to Grow, put your money in there, get the infrastructure going and truly have a good plan.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): We're debating this bill in the context of the themes that have developed here over the last couple of weeks, and the previous speaker, the member for Simcoe-Grey, made reference to them. He talked about "alleged" scandal. Alleged? It's a full-blown scandal. It's a scandal that's just in flames. It's not an alleged scandal. It's not a suspected scandal. It's not a maybe scandal. It's \$10,000-a-pop access to some of the most powerful people in the

province buying their way into multi-million-dollar properties that are being exempted from the greenbelt. That's a full-blown, all-out—that's the old full Monty scandal where I come from.

So we're talking about the theme of scandal and, therefore, the theme of corruption.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Niagara Centre to use parliamentary language. I would prefer that he not use that particular word that he just used.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

That leads me to walk in here this morning. I was walking here this morning, and it was cold. I was wearing my jacket and a sweater, had my hands in my pockets and was walking here to Queen's Park..

Mr. Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Did you have a hat?

Mr. Kormos: No hat—I should have worn one; I should have known better. I wasn't wearing the kind of underclothing—I'll put it politely—that I would be inclined to wear if I were back home on a cold, chilly, breezy day like this. But I did have my hands in my pockets.

1650

I'm walking here, and it was cold. It was chilly; a little bit of a wind blew right through. As I passed the Whitney Block across the road over here, I see the cannon. You know the cannon on Queen's Park Circle, in front of Whitney Block. It made me think about just how cold today was.

You see, I want to speak to you about what's parliamentary and what's unparliamentary. In old days, in old English, a cannon, a smaller one than the one we saw out there beside the Whitney Block, was called a "monkey." In fact, there were iron monkeys and iron cannons, and there were brass monkeys. An old English word for cannon is "monkey." This is where I'm saying that we've got to be thoughtful. We've got to think about what's parliamentary and what's not. We've got to think about what's really being said before we want to jump up—

The Acting Speaker: I'll be the judge of that.

I recognize the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: —before we jump up and accuse another member of using unparliamentary language.

Let me tell you how cold it was. Not only were these small cannon in old English called monkeys; as I said, brass was a common material used to forge these monkeys, hence "brass monkeys." The plate on the wood decking of a ship was made of brass as well—you understand what I'm saying—because you didn't want to mount the monkey on the wood because of—

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: No one can question the member for Niagara Centre's expertise in shipbuilding, but the scope of Bill 136 doesn't cover shipbuilding.

The Acting Speaker: I would have to agree that I'm unclear as to how this particular aspect of your speech is making reference to the bill that we're discussing this

afternoon. I would ask you to keep your remarks germane to the issue at hand.

Mr. Kormos: Understand that the brass monkey sits on a plate called a brass monkey. You've seen—

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps I'm missing something. Could you explain to me how this relates to the bill?

Mr. Kormos: Precisely, Speaker. You can get to Niagara on the QEW and get there fast, but you're not going to see any of the scenery. If you go down Highway 20, it's going to take you twice as long to get there, but you're going to see a lot more and learn a lot more on your way from here to the heart of Niagara region. Do you understand what I'm saying, Speaker? So I may not be getting to where I want to go as quickly as others would want me to, and I may be taking the tourist route, but trust me: We're going to examine some things, we're going to see some things, and we're going to learn some things on the way there.

I am talking about the themes that we're debating in this bill, and the context. This bill doesn't develop in isolation. Please.

I was telling you about walking to work this morning. I was telling you about seeing the cannon, and old cannons known as brass monkeys, sitting on a brass plate called the monkey. As you recall from going to Fort George or Fort Henry, the cannonballs would be mounted in a pyramid on that plate beside the cannon. When it gets so cold as to freeze the balls off a brass monkey, what's happening is that the cannonballs are contracting, and the pyramid loses its design. The cannonballs literally roll onto the deck. So an old British term, "It was cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey," had absolutely nothing to do—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: I hear behind me the heckling by a member who has a simian obsession.

"It was cold enough this morning to freeze the balls off a brass monkey." What's happened is, we've understood that that phrase is perfectly parliamentary; there is nothing unparliamentary about it at all. But had I simply leapt into it—do you understand what I'm saying?—had I simply opened with that, had I simply said, "You know, Speaker, this morning it was cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey," the Speaker probably would have jumped up and said, "That's unparliamentary." That's why we took the tourist route there instead of the fast route, because what at first blush some here might protest as being unparliamentary language, upon reflection is, in fact, very parliamentary and very, very appropriate. So I say to you, this morning it was cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey. That, as you know, is an entirely appropriate parliamentary term. It describes a scenario in a graphic way that to merely say, "It was cold," would not serve; or, "I was shivering." Now I'll tell you how cold it was. You know how cold it was. You were out there, too.

So we're talking about this bill in the context of scandal, in the context of \$10,000-a-pop access to the Premier's ear and the Minister of Finance's ear, and

perhaps to Minister Gerretsen's ear, the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The other theme that's developed is the theme around the government's allegation—government, not me. I know my federal Liberal counterparts down in Niagara, good folks like John Maloney, MP, Liberal—he got elected; he got the majority of votes in the federal election—and Walt Lastewka from up in St. Catharines. I don't support them politically. I don't agree with them politically. I would have far sooner had the NDP candidate win. But I thought they had been doing their best. Well, the government, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals at Queen's Park, have been saying day after day that Walt Lastewka, the federal Liberal member for St. Catharines, is incompetent. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals here at Queen's Park have been saying day after day that John Maloney, the Liberal MP for Welland riding, is incompetent.

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre is imputing motives against a member of this Legislature, which is contrary to section 23(i) of the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker: I do not find that the member for Niagara Centre is imputing motive, but he has to be careful about the language he uses because I will rule him out of order if he uses unparliamentary language.

Mr. Kormos: Precisely. I hope that if Theresa Wilson is watching over in Alliston—I suspect Theresa Wilson was watching her son Jimmy do his speech. Now, Ms. Wilson, if you take any offence at anything I have said, you let me know, you let Jim know, the member for Simcoe North.

It's the voters who are the ultimate judge. Here we go again, the Speaker is admonishing me to be careful about the language I use. The Speaker is saying, "Member, please be careful about using unparliamentary language." But that's why I opened my comments with that tourist road down to Niagara. Remember, Speaker, "It was so cold, you could freeze the balls off a brass monkey"? You started to get up when I started that story, didn't you? The Speaker started to get up to warn me about unparliamentary language. You saw him start to rise. But then when I had a chance to take that tourist route to Niagara instead of the QEW, the Speaker realized the language was perfectly parliamentary. So you can't jump to conclusions. That is why I'm saying, Speaker, quite frankly, of all the people who take the chair here, you are one of the people who take the job most seriously. You know I am not telling stories out of school. I've said that to you and I've said it to other people. I've said it many times and I hope I have a chance to do it again.

So what have we got? A provincial government, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals here at Queen's Park, that is saying that 74 federal Liberal MPs representing the province of Ontario are not doing their job, that they are letting Ontario down, that they are not getting Ontario its fair share? In effect, Dalton McGuinty has been running an election campaign against 74 Liberal Ontario MPs, and I'm coming to their defence. I'm saying, "John Maloney from down Welland way seems to me like a

decent guy," but then Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals stand up and say, "John Maloney is betraying the people of Ontario because Ontario is not getting its fair share of federal money."

Walt Lastewka and I are not exactly close—and if Jim Bradley, the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, were in the room, he could explain that—although I have regard for Mr. Lastewka and his family. Again, I haven't campaigned for Mr. Lastewka; of course not. If I had my druthers, it wouldn't be the Liberal candidate who would have won, it would have been the NDP candidate. But I'm shocked that I have to rise to the defence of Mr. Lastewka against the finger-pointing of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals at Queen's Park. Good grief.

1700

The Acting Speaker: I would like to remind all members of the House, and I would ask them once again that when they're talking about another member of the Legislature to make reference to either their riding name or their ministry name. In the case of the Premier, it is "the Premier," not what you referred to him as.

Mr. Kormos: I will refer to him as "Premier," because everybody knows who I'm talking about: the Premier, right? We've seen the caricatures. We've seen the cartoons. We've seen the references to Pinocchio characters. Everybody knows which Premier I'm talking about. You'd have to be from Mars not to know which Premier I'm talking about: The Liberal Premier of Ontario, the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, who has been dumping shamelessly on Liberal federal members of Parliament.

I haven't seen Jim Karygiannis for a while. You've got to understand, he's not a provincial member, so I don't have to refer to him by riding. But I haven't seen Jim Karygiannis for a while. I usually see him at ethnic events here in Toronto. I know him to be a pretty outspoken guy, a little bit of a character, and I don't think he'd mind me saying that, and I think people who know him probably better than I do would agree. But I bet you Jim Karygiannis is just smoking mad that he's being dumped on left and right by his Liberal junior cousins here at Queen's Park. Because the provincial government of Ontario, its Liberal Premier and its Liberal Party leader have been saying clearly, day after day, that Ontario's 74 Liberal MPs aren't up to the job, that they're not doing their job, that they're failing the people of Ontario, that in their representation of Ontario they're selling Ontario short; in fact, they're selling Ontario out. I never thought I'd see the day where I had to come to the defence of Liberals from these types of incredible attacks by other Liberals. But who am I to judge? The Premier could be right. The Ontario Liberal Party could be right. After all, they know these folks far better than I do.

So here we are. Thank you, Mr.—

Interjection: Public infrastructure.

Mr. Kormos: Minister of Public Infrastructure. I almost called him "Mr. Caplan," but then Mr. Wilson, who's the member for Simcoe-Grey, corrected me. He came to my aid. Ms. Wilson, I want you to know your

son saved me from the jackpot—the Speaker might well have tossed me on that one—by making sure I called Mr. Caplan the Minister of Public Infrastructure.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: So we've got the Minister of Public Infrastructure saving me by reminding me to refer to the bill, Bill 136.

Let me tell you what places like Welland need. You talk about old small-town Ontario, old, industrial small-town Ontario. Old industrial small-town Ontario doesn't need über-planning coming out of the central soviet to tell it how to do smart development of land, especially when it comes to, amongst other things, protecting valuable and scarce agriculture land. For instance, we know down in Niagara that if you extended the 406 southbound to Highway 3 in Port Colborne and four-laned it the way the planning has provided for, you'd do a lot more to save tender fruit land and scarce agricultural land that way than you would with any greenbelt.

You make grape growing profitable. You make it attractive for farmers who grow grapes, many of them for generations; and I know a whole lot of them down there in Niagara. You make it profitable for them to grow grapes instead of having to subsidize their grape-growing operations by working in any number of other places off-site, off the farmland. You do that, for instance, by making sure that wine labelled Ontario wine is 100% Ontario grapes. That's not rocket science, as the guy on the cooking channel says. That's pretty straightforward common sense. You don't have to be a rocket scientist or a genius to figure that out.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): Like grape juice from Chile.

Mr. Kormos: Look, where is the corn coming from? We've got US corn feeding our ethyl alcohol operations and Chilean grape and grape juice being shipped in big tanker ships, and I don't have to tell you wine drinkers who are buying so-called Ontario wine that's full of Chilean grape what happens to that grape juice in those ships en route from Chile, all the way through the Panama Canal, up into eastern Canada and down the St. Lawrence Seaway. If any of you have ever been on a ship working with seafarers, I don't have to tell you what happens to that grape juice during the course of a long voyage. Think about it the next time you buy so-called Ontario wine that isn't 100% Ontario grape. This government would do a service to Niagara and Ontario agricultural land by simply requiring that Ontario wine be 100% Ontario grape and 100% Ontario juice.

This government could do a whole lot for small-town Ontario that wants to be smart in terms of its development by giving it the financial resources it needs to remediate brownfields. In cities like where I come from, we've got acre upon acre of old factory land—

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to ask you if it's in order that—oh, there was no minister in the House, and it appears that the McGuinty government has produced one to join us for the debate. That's awfully good of them.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for interrupting.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: I'm really grateful to the member for Nepean–Carleton for luring a cabinet minister back into chamber.

What we need in small-town municipal Ontario is the financial support this province should provide if we're going to remediate brownfields that consist of acre after acre of land that, for the moment, is of no use but should be utilized in the very hearts of our communities.

I regret not having more time to speak to this bill, but others—my colleagues—will. I appreciate having had the opportunity to clarify what is parliamentary and what is unparliamentary in terms of language, knowing full well that some of that language, some of those phrases, like “chicken,” amongst others, will be on the list of words that are parliamentary that are kept by the Clerk.

I want you to know that I will be voting against Bill 136: Bill 136 is a backdrop, again, for more of the \$10,000-a-pop private soirée dinners at posh, exclusive mansions in gated neighbourhoods, where the donors show up in their chauffeur-driven Bentleys and Rolls-Royces and Lincoln Continentals and Town Cars to partake of the most expensive of food and bend the ear of the most powerful people in Ontario, like the Premier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and, indeed, David MacNaughton, who calls the real shots.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I listened with great care to the member from Welland's comments, thinking initially that in the first three quarters of his speech there was so little of substance that it would be difficult to respond. But he did, in fairness, get to some significant items later when he talked about what small-town Ontario needs. He even managed to weave into his comments what I know is a very real concern he has about the grape growers and some of their concerns down in Niagara.

Mr. Kormos: And I do my best to support them.

Mr. McMeekin: As we all should. Certainly we stand together on that count.

I come from small-town Ontario. What small-town Ontario needs is a government that has the vision to understand the importance of not only where not to grow but where to grow, and the importance of templating the kind of infrastructure funding over that, which actually gives some substance to terms like “smart growth” and “intelligent planning.” I think that is very much what this bill is about, and then of course having the courage to act.

On the issue of rural economies, I happen to share the member opposite's view that food sovereignty is a very important issue. Without food sovereignty—a province's ability to grow and market and distribute its own products—what's next: oil for food, weapons for food, water for food? I don't think that's the kind of province we want.

1710

Mr. Baird: I want to congratulate the member for Niagara Centre on his speech. I want to say to the mem-

ber for Mississauga West that the member for Niagara Centre is like a commodity grown in his riding, like wine. Your appreciation for his remarks will appreciate over time. I can certainly say that's been my experience.

We share the concern: The type of centralization of decision-making that this legislation provides is of tremendous concern to all of us. This government can't even issue birth certificates properly. How in heck are they going to centrally plan and override democratically elected councils on a range of issues? We want to inquire as to how they make their decisions and change their minds when they come into this place and don't do that. I share that part of the member's speech.

This is particularly bad for the agricultural community and for rural Ontario. I see my friend from Tweed here, Mrs. Dombrowsky, sitting in the back row. It has certainly come to my attention that there have been some images put up on a Web site by a particular group with respect to that member, and I want in the strongest of terms, on behalf of the official opposition, to dissociate ourselves from some things that should be of tremendous concern to all elected officials. On behalf of the official opposition, I want to put on the record that we dissociate ourselves from those things. I have no hesitation in taking that member on toughly on tough issues and going after her for the stand she takes personally, but that in all respects goes way over the top.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I would make comments on brass monkeys, but I don't want to go there just now.

I just want to take an opportunity to respond to part of the speech by the member for Niagara Centre. He kind of alluded, I thought, but never really got to the point that the government was pretty clear about their promises. They were going to give municipalities the kind of ability they needed to do their own thing when it came to planning and running their municipalities. Isn't that what they said in the last election? Isn't that what they promised in the red book that they ran on in the last election?

If you look at this legislation, it's like my good friend the member from Nepean and official opposition House leader just raised. This is the hand of government reaching over from the Dalton McGuinty central bureau, the commissar of Ontario, down into municipalities, telling them how they are going to deal with issues of planning. Now, there may be arguments for that, but this is not what the government argued and put forward in the last election. They were quite clear. They said they would respect municipal governments, that they would give municipal governments the ability they needed to do their own planning, that they were going to respect the partnership they would have as a provincial government, should they be elected, with their municipal counterparts.

You don't see that in this legislation. What you see is Liberals who basically say one thing during an election—it is like the old saying; they basically say one thing during the election and act quite differently once the election happens and they become the government. I've

always made the point that Liberals campaign like New Democrats, but when it comes to the time of being in office, they certainly don't act like them; they act like a bunch of Tories. I'm not so sure that is in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

Now, with respect to my good friend the member for Nepean-Carleton, I have some disagreements with some of the policies of the Tory party, and those are the same disagreements that I have with the Liberal Party on this particular issue. But I know the member for Nepean-Carleton doesn't lie.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): This afternoon was interesting in question period. I always remember a famous quote from the late John Diefenbaker. The late Mr. Diefenbaker, when he was Prime Minister, once said, "Big game hunters are never fooled by little rabbit tracks."

This afternoon, from the opposition, we saw a lot of rabbit tracks being articulated with regard to Bill 136 and the whole issue of Places to Grow. My friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot touched upon a very important point when he made his brief remarks about a province needing to feed itself. If you will recall, at the end of the day, one of the key reasons the Soviet Union broke up was that the Soviet Union could never feed itself. You go back in history, to the 1930s, when Joseph Stalin got rid of all the Ukrainian farmers in the steppes, which was the primary ag area of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union never really recovered from that, and at the end of the day it was part of its breakup.

I relate that to Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act. This piece of legislation talks about preserving agricultural farmland for future generations and the ability of Ontario to feed its people. I think that's crucially important for our economic future. Certainly if we didn't have the ability to grow and feed ourselves, we would become much more vulnerable to pressures outside our borders. We know how the Americans have put stress on us with regard to the trade in live cattle and softwood lumber, and I would shudder at the thought if, through trade and agricultural commodities, they could again put that kind of pressure on us. What would they want from us? They would want our oil and our water. So it's very important that Bill 136 move ahead.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. It's nowhere near enough.

Look, small-town Ontario is in desperate need of the funding necessary to restore and rebuild aging existing infrastructure. If this government were to do any specific project that would win it, and not inappropriately so, kudos from the real people of Ontario, from ordinary folks out there, it would be on a concentrated, concerted effort to ensure that small-town Ontario, places like where I come from, Welland, Thorold, Pelham, St. Catharines, yes, Port Colborne and Fort Erie too, towns like Timmins and around Timmins that I have been up to, along with the member for Timmins-James Bay—never

mind places like Attawapiskat and Peawanuck. I tell people in this chamber that if and when they've got the opportunity to travel into ridings like Timmins-James Bay, and I know some of you have over the course of the last year and a half, go to communities like Peawanuck and Attawapiskat and see the hemorrhaging in those communities in so many ways because of government's failure to meet their needs in terms of the most fundamental and basic infrastructures, those which provide that minimal level of safety and security in a community that makes them modestly healthy.

I say to you that Bill 136 isn't going to meet the needs of folks down where I come from. It's not going to meet the needs of the folks across the largest part of Ontario. It may not meet the needs of any of the people of Ontario. Because what small-town Ontario needs now is real assistance in remediating, cleaning up brownfields and immediate assistance in rebuilding infrastructure across the board, both underground and surface infrastructure. I've told you how many times about the sewer project from hell? Well, that's but one illustration.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Delaney: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 136, the Places to Grow legislation, and I'll be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke North.

It has been my privilege and my life experience to have lived in three provinces in Canada, and in four of our country's greatest cities: Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Mississauga. Through the 1960s, the 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s, I watched the cities and provinces that I lived and worked in approach the issues of development and infrastructure in very different ways and for very different reasons.

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I watched the city of Montreal get ready for Expo '67 and Canada's centennial year and put together a very interesting program of development that made the city the most unique place in the world to live in at the time.

There was a time, a generation ago, when southern Ontario led North America in how it approached growth, how it approached infrastructure and development issues. People from other regions came here to see what a modern city could be like, to see how it could be clean, how it could be safe and how it could be livable. And then, for an entire generation, Ontario lost its way.

For example, a generation ago, the city of Washington, DC, looked to a progressive and growing city like Toronto as a model of how to move people from where they live to where they work and where they play. Without each person driving two tons of steel from where they live to where they work, Toronto was showing North Americans how you get along, how you get to work, how you get to where you play.

Each year, at that time, the TTC used to win North American awards for being the best transit system in North America. Not any more. That was then. Today, a visitor from the greater Toronto area to Washington would marvel at that city's modern and clean Metro, how efficient it is and how far it goes. Ontario's first and only

subway got started in 1954. Washington got construction underway in the mid-1970s. Toronto had a 20-year head start. Montreal started construction of the Métro in the mid-1960s. Toronto had a 10-year head start. Vancouver started the SkyTrain in preparation for Expo '86 in the mid-1980s. Toronto had a 30-year head start. Today's Toronto subway route would be very familiar to a Toronto resident of the 1970s, of which I was one. That was then.

While Toronto's expansion of the subway was incremental, other cities progressed in leaps and bounds. Montreal never stopped digging. Washington never stopped expanding. The TTC that went from Main to Jane now goes from Kennedy to Kipling. The Métro in Montreal that went downtown now sprawls throughout the entire city. You can get from pretty much anywhere to anywhere else in metro Montreal on the Métro. In Washington, you can get to distant suburbs like German town and Bethesda on the Metro.

Instead of coming to Ontario to learn how to do transit efficiently, Ontarians now buy hotel rooms in other cities in a bid to catch up and to once again become world class.

I focused on transit, but the story is the same in protecting green spaces, in managing our watershed, in protecting our agricultural and recreational lands, in curbing urban sprawl, in coping with traffic gridlock and dealing with smog, in improving employment opportunities and in having housing choices. That is the scope of Bill 136.

Dense urban areas in other regions of North America are often not as prosperous and as fortunate as the Golden Horseshoe. They can't afford to get it wrong once or twice, so they tend to get more things right on the first try. Getting growth issues right is why I'm supporting Bill 136, the Places to Grow legislation. For the first time in a whole generation, an Ontario government has finally got it right. Its vision is need over greed, sustainable prosperity over short-term exploitation and an enduring good quality of life for the one in five Canadians who live here over choking traffic and pollution.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal has taken the good work done by our predecessors in government, be that in Smart Growth, be that in the Golden report, and enlarged its scope. The minister has given all Ontarians a plan to embrace, a vision to be proud of and a future to look forward to with confidence. Given its roots, I would imagine that all three parties would support Bill 136.

Between July 2004 and last fall, some 1,600 people, many of them urban planning specialists, attended eight public meetings, and almost 500 written submissions were received. The result was the Places to Grow Act, a framework for Ontario to proceed with a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe.

Decisive action by Ontario's government is needed, simply because the pace of growth in this rich, multi-cultural and diverse region that so many of us call home has been so rapid.

We all know that the two densest regions in North America are New York City and Los Angeles; the third is Chicago. Before too many years, Chicago will have stepped aside. Toronto and the greater Golden Horseshoe will have surpassed Chicago and will be the third-densest region in North America.

How does one set the GTA's strong and continuing growth in perspective? Let me explain it this way. My colleague the Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing, who's also the member for Kingston and the Islands, told me earlier today that Kingston is home to about 130,000 people. Try to imagine building an entire city the size of historic Kingston in just one year, within a one-hour drive of Toronto city hall; not merely the houses but the services, the roads and infrastructure, the power and most especially the schools, the businesses, the economic opportunities and, of course, the people. The dynamic communities that make up the greater Golden Horseshoe have done this equivalent of building Kingston each and every year, not just once but every year for at least 30 years in a row.

Great cities don't just happen. My great city of Mississauga was part of that stunning growth. The Places to Grow Act allows municipalities and communities to be involved in the drafting of regulations that govern the development and implementation of the growth plans of the future. This is an issue I've discussed in my ward, ward 9, in Mississauga with my councillor, Pat Saito. There is nothing that we want more, as a city, in Mississauga than the ability to control the development that goes on within our borders, and that is the type of control that Bill 136 offers municipalities.

In a municipality like Mississauga, with a great mayor like Hazel McCallion, a living legend in her own time—we realize that one of the world's great mayors, a mayor of the stature of, say, Willy Brandt in Berlin, Teddy Kollek in Jerusalem, Ed Koch in New York or Charlotte Whitton in Ottawa, is our mayor in the city of Mississauga, and we're proud of her. She has managed Mississauga from being a bedroom community of Toronto to a point where the city of Mississauga now brings in 2,000 more people per day than it sends out. We are a net importer of people. In fact, we were talking the other week, and we said, "Oh, Toronto—isn't that that rather large suburb just to the east of the city of Mississauga?" No, we don't mean that. Toronto is a great city; we're proud of it.

Bill 136 would, if passed, help our communities promote economic prosperity. It would identify growth opportunities within our communities. It would build the infrastructure that we need. It would protect our green spaces and ensure that the four million new people who will make their homes in the greater Golden Horseshoe will enjoy lives as rich in opportunity as they are in quality.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I'm proud to share remarks with my colleague from Mississauga West.

I think it's important to state for all who are listening and for the members of this House that Bill 136, the Places to Grow Act, is really an encapsulation of stra-

tegic vision with a mind to foster quality of life and prosperity. How? By helping to control sprawl and gridlock and actually encouraging smart growth, ultimately to make more livable and prosperous communities. I think we, collectively, should therefore honour and welcome and salute the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal for his efforts.

I quote for a moment an urban planner who said something that I think we might take to heart with regard to this particular bill, and that is, "The leader has to be practical and a realist, yet must talk the language of the visionary and the idealist." I think that vision is very much encapsulated here in Bill 136.

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If I might for a moment make a health and medical argument for Places to Grow and for the establishment of an Ontario-wide greenbelt, I quote, for example, from some reports of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. Before I do that, I'd like to extend a quotation from Sigmund Freud, who was referring to the human body. He said, "Anatomy is destiny." But I think if we extend that argument to the province of Ontario as a whole, we can see how very much our urban planning, or the anatomy of our great province, will in fact affect our long-term destiny.

The Ontario College of Family Physicians: "In their car-dependent world, suburban Ontarians are less active and falling prey to obesity and serious diseases like diabetes, asthma and heart problems....

"More traffic means more engine emissions; the resulting pollution affects our health"—asthma incidence is now reaching epidemic proportions.

"The stress of battling ever-longer daily commutes through almost impenetrable gridlock impacts negatively on commuters and their quality of family life.

"Ontario's sprawl-related health problems are similar to the US situation, but far worse compared to Europe" and other cities and jurisdictions which have actually taken intelligent planning seriously.

To quote from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, "Governments need to recognize that approaches to community design that make it possible, and better yet rational, to walk to destinations has become a health policy issue that's critical" in the way we plan our cities.

There are many things that can be said with regard to the greenbelt. For example, we know that by the year 2031 almost four million additional people will live in the Golden Horseshoe. Much of that influx will actually occur within my own riding of Etobicoke North.

Let's make it into a personal sort of experience. I have two young children, and by the time they are in university, this province will have almost four million additional people. Without this historic legislation, it is entirely possible that great areas of this province may become a paved-over parking lot. I would like to, in my capacity here as a legislator, offer my children and other generations access to nourishing Ontario farm foods, clean air and the nature that we so proudly call our own. The greenbelt will provide that. On the other hand, as

well, given intelligent planning, I want to offer my children the ability to live in comfortable, affordable cities, in safe and healthy neighbourhoods, and this too is what the greenbelt will provide.

This legislation is an historic step to combat urban sprawl and strikes that essential balance between strong communities and a respect for nature. It is a strategic vision taking into account quality of life and prosperity, all the while controlling sprawl and gridlock and encouraging smart growth so that we may have ever-prosperous communities. As Freud said, "Anatomy is destiny," and with this Places to Grow Act we are helping to better ensure the optimization of the anatomy of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments this afternoon on the Liberal speakers who talked about Bill 136 and who brought forth some interesting points. I think, overall, there are a lot of people who generally support the idea of growth areas. There is no question about that. We have seen urban sprawl for many decades now and there is no question that there is support for specific areas in the province.

However, with that, there are a lot of other issues that the government has to address, other than simply drawing a fine map and drawing some circles around municipalities. For example, earlier today some speakers referred to the number of vehicles that travel from their homes in the north, east and west of the province, and they have to commute in literally thousands of cars. It would be nice if it was part of this plan. What the government and the citizens of this province could do is, if we're going to have people living in these growth areas, let's make sure that's where the jobs are; that most of the jobs created are not actually in the GTA; that for every home that's built in some of the growth areas, there would be a job to accompany that, or 0.5 jobs, or whatever that may be.

I think that's all part of the package, along with some of the concerns we've heard along the lines of infrastructure investment by the province as well. If you're going to put people in growth areas, you're going to have to make sure they have schools, hospitals, long-term-care facilities and all the things that transfer agencies require here in the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

Mr. Bisson: I kind of enjoyed the comments from the two members, although they were from a bit of a different perspective. I would just comment quickly on one. I'm sure my good colleague over here from the riding of Etobicoke North meant it in a positive way, but he was disparaging the differences between rural and urban ridings. I think you were trying to make a point. I don't want to go too far down the point you were trying to make, otherwise I might get a little bit upset, but I won't do that today.

I just want to remind the members that part of the issue here is—philosophically, I can agree that we have to have rules around planning that make some sense

when it comes to the issue of being able to help municipalities have development policies that are in sync across the province. For example, when we were government, we did reforms to the Planning Act that subsequently were undone by another government, but that's for another debate. But the issue was that we thought it was important that we have planning policies and practices that were consistent with the Planning Act. It's something that was subsequently undone.

I notice in the legislation you're going back to the premise that we set up back in 1992, and I guess that is a good thing. However, I think in doing that, we've got to come back to the point the member for Niagara Centre made, which is, we need to make sure that we are senior partners when it comes to funding and assisting the municipalities to do the kind of work they've got to do around rebuilding the infrastructure, because you will know that the infrastructure in many communities across Ontario is really falling fast. It's quite one thing for this provincial government and this Premier to yell and scream at the federal government, "We want our transfers; give them to us now," and how unfair it is that they're downloading on us, the province, but we shouldn't reciprocate by going after municipalities and not giving them the kind of support they need to maintain their infrastructure.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's my pleasure to rise and support Bill 136. I want to take just a little bit of a different swing at this and talk about one of the things I feel has been very important as part of the discussion on this bill as it moves forward, and that is, how is our agricultural community affected by this legislation? As many of you know, I come from a rural municipality and many years working with municipal government. What I've heard repeatedly is, what can we do to protect farmland and what does the agricultural community need in order to ensure that their farmland is protected from urban sprawl?

I feel that this bill begins to address the concerns of our agricultural community by identifying where the infrastructure should be placed and ensuring that higher density is also a part of that formula. One of the things my fellow member from Etobicoke North knows, as he said in his previous statement, is that rural communities are different with respect to the density within our communities. But from the agricultural community—and I heard this repeatedly—part of the discussion has been, what do they need in order to ensure that they remain viable? There have been many discussions on the tools that our agricultural community needs.

I welcome the discussion from all of our urban counterparts, so that they understand the difficulties that our agricultural community is facing right now. If we do not begin to protect our farmland within Ontario, the farmers will have to move forward in a way to make sure they have sustainability, and their last crop will be a crop of houses. That's not what we want.

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Mr. Wilson: It was interesting to hear the comments of the Liberal members. But they've got to understand

that our Smart Growth plans—one of the members said he hopes we'll support Bill 136 because they're building upon the work of the previous Conservative government with respect to Smart Growth. But our Smart Growth plans did not envision overriding official plans of municipalities, because we'd had bad experiences in the past, in the Bill Davis government.

In my own riding, my predecessor, George McCague, was accused—about a year after he left this place in 1990, he became mayor of Alliston. Near the end of the first term, a lady went into the local OPP office and accused Mr. McCague, back when he was chair of cabinet and Chair of Management Board under Bill Davis, of having rejigged the official plan of New Tecumseth—Tecumseth township back then—in favour of a developer at the Nottawasaga Inn. It was on the front page of the *Toronto Sun* and it cost Mr. McCague his second term as mayor; he was doing an excellent job. The fact of the matter is, none of that occurred.

Today we see in this bill that the minister will take powers upon himself to make official plan amendments, to override the planning that is done by municipalities. It's an unprecedented power grab in this legislation, and no one on the Liberal side is talking about that. You don't want to do that. Citizens, like in the George McCague case, get so upset that they go to the bother of going to planning meetings.

I know Simcoe county has spent the past decade fine-tuning the official plan. We required it and the previous NDP government required it: Everybody go back and do their official plans, not just at the local level but at the county level or upper-tier level. All that good work has been done. Now this bill brings in new planning areas, 25 new communities that are targeted for 40% intensification in growth. I tell you, local councils are going to resent this legislation, and you're going to get an earful once you start overriding official plans.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Delaney: I'd like to thank my colleagues for their very thoughtful comments on Bill 136.

The member for Simcoe North—a member whom I have gotten to know, someone of great commitment, personal integrity and certainly fathomless work ethic—points out that despite our party positions, we do share many elements in common in our vision of what's best for Ontario. I thank him very much for his comments.

The member from Timmins—James Bay points out the very many valid needs of our rural ridings. We know how hard he works in his own riding, which is larger than many countries in this world. We hope that he joins us in helping the greater Golden Horseshoe plan come together so that it can keep on being the goose that lays the golden eggs that Ontario needs to continue to build our north and our rural communities.

The member from Huron—Bruce speaks from her own personal experience in rural Ontario, and I certainly respect that. She talks about protecting land not just at a stroke of the pen, but as a long-term process that needs

very careful planning and consistent application through the type of open process we strove for in Bill 136.

I especially thank my colleague from Simcoe—Grey. He points out the Smart Growth plan of the former government, many elements of which were taken more or less intact to build the Places to Grow legislation. I say to him that it empowers rather than disempowers municipalities in dealing with issues of growth and in managing the challenges that municipalities in the greater Golden Horseshoe are going to face in the next generation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on Bill 136?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 136. Certainly I think we all agree that there is a need to take action in order to contain and curb sprawl. We also need to ensure that we do use all the principles required in order to ensure better urban and rural planning as we take a look at how we want our province to look in the coming years.

I am pleased to say that our party, the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of John Tory, and before that of other Premiers, has a very proud history in urban planning. I think we can best see that exemplified through the Smart Growth planning, which was very well received by communities in this province.

Despite the fact that this bill moves forward and builds on what we have done in the past, I share some of the concerns that have already been expressed by some of my colleagues about this bill. One of the concerns I have is the powers it gives to the minister, and obviously the lack of infrastructure planning. I am really quite concerned about the lack of infrastructure planning. Also, if you take a look at some parts of the legislation, at the intensification targets, it appears somewhat unrealistic.

This is a bill that allows the minister to create an advisory council. I would suggest, however, that this bill needs to avoid the problems of the greenbelt. The minister is having some problems because there have been changes made to the greenbelt boundaries after people paid \$10,000 to speak to him, to the finance minister and to the Premier. So I am concerned about any power the minister has in this bill and what changes might be made in return for donations to the Liberal Party. I think it's important that they make sure they don't get into that type of difficulty.

Section 12 of the bill requires the municipality's official plan to conform to the growth plan, so it gives the minister the power to unilaterally change an official plan should he or she decide it does not conform with the province's growth plan. That is really regrettable. This is an example of this government again pretending to know what's best for municipalities and for people in this province.

But I want to focus on our record, because, as I say, I think our government, under different Premiers, has a very proud record on Smart Growth. As you know, it was in January 2001 that Premier Harris announced the need for a made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy. We needed to promote and manage growth in ways that could sustain our economy, build strong communities and promote a

healthy environment. So our government established Smart Growth goals and some of those goals included—I want to really stress them, because I think they were excellent goals. They were very well received by people in this province.

One of the goals was that you use the existing infrastructure and resources to increase the capacity for economic growth. Then you invest wisely in your new infrastructure, after you have built on the existing infrastructure and resources. Another goal was to manage growth by making tough choices about where development should go. Another goal was to expand transportation choices within and between communities. Another goal was to protect our natural areas and our farmland for future generations. That is a very important goal, that we protect those natural areas and that farmland for future generations. Another goal was to encourage growth in those areas of the province where it would have the least impact on the environment.

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I know that in my community at the present time there is certainly debate on some new development that is taking place in Waterloo and the impact it may have on the environment. Obviously some people are going to have to make some choices about more development, more growth, or protection of the environment.

How is our Smart Growth plan, which we developed under Premier Harris in 2001, different from this document, Places to Grow? I think the key difference, and an important difference, is the fact that our Smart Growth plans were made by local decision-makers. They were not made, in this case, by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Our Smart Growth plans covered the entire province and focused on issues that were totally local. They were not dictated by Queen's Park, and, as I said, they were not made by one individual, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Again, our Smart Growth plans were backed up with financial commitments on infrastructure, such as the \$1.25 billion over 10 years through the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships. We don't see that same financial commitment, support, long-term plan for the infrastructure required to implement some of these proposals.

Our Smart Growth plan focused on gridlock, while Places to Grow, combined with the greenbelt, leads to leapfrogging and longer commute times. I can certainly speak to that. Anyone living in Kitchener-Waterloo is well aware of the gridlock. In fact, anybody living in the 905 area is well aware of the gridlock, and we focused on that gridlock. We don't see that same recognition in this paper. In fact, this proposal is actually going to lead people to jump over parcels of land and build further out, but there is no plan as to how people are going to commute to their jobs, which could well be in the middle of the city of Toronto. So it's going to mean longer commute times for people.

Commute times are long enough as they are—I can speak personally. When I was elected in 1990, I could probably get here in an hour and 15 minutes on a good

day. I would be hard pressed now to get here in two hours. In fact, on some days it could well be three. We simply don't have the infrastructure to support taking people from A to B, and this plan certainly doesn't have any plan to improve the problems of gridlock.

Our Smart Growth plan was much more complete, in that it examined affordable housing, waste management, environmental protection, gridlock, and sewer and water resources from a long-term growth perspective. So I think you can see that our plan was very, very different from Places to Grow. It was a much more comprehensive plan, and there was actually a financial commitment to the infrastructure that was going to be required for the implementation of the plan, and it dealt with gridlock and of course other areas that I have just noted.

I guess it's important to take a look at what AMO is saying—AMO of course being the association for municipalities in Ontario. These are very much the people who are going to be affected by this plan. They said in February 2005, as they responded to Places to Grow: "We are concerned that there is now more than one ministry responsible for land use planning and coordination. Rather than having municipalities and the public negotiate with various ministries, the government should designate a lead ministry on these issues." So they've recognized that this plan isn't going to achieve its objectives easily. There's going to have to be a lot of communication with more than one ministry.

They go on to say that some of the municipalities that are currently designated for growth may not be willing recipients of that growth due to any number of issues, including the effects growth may have on their currently stable agricultural community and the environmental pressure growth may place on their already strained resources. I can tell you that this was a concern when the minister came to Kitchener-Waterloo to speak to this issue. There were people from the agricultural community who did have concerns about Places to Grow. There were others who had concerns about the environmental pressure that may result as a consequence of the decision to designate growth areas that might not be willing recipients.

Also, AMO went on to say, "The legislation must clarify the basis for a hearings officer to hear a given matter and what criteria that office will utilize during a hearing." AMO also recommended that consideration be given to an initial review period of five years.

They continued by saying, "There is inadequate focus on social planning requirements in land use planning, as the plan contents do not address issues of human infrastructure such as schools, hospitals and even softer issues such as doctor shortages." You know, it is so important to take into consideration the fact that this document just doesn't address that whole issue of human infrastructure. For example, if we take a look at doctor shortages, we know that at the present time in the province of Ontario, there are about one million people who do not have a doctor. It is important, when you have a document such as Places to Grow, that it consider all of the infrastructure

requirements, not just land use planning but also social planning.

The province also needs to consider, says AMO, "planning and funding any local infrastructure that may be required to support new provincial growth strategies." They go on to say, "The Development Charges Act must be amended to reinstate the ability for a municipality to collect all growth-related capital costs, including those of building hospitals."

I guess there are concerns. AMO has concerns, and I know other people have concerns. I certainly hope this government, for once, will accept some amendments. Thus far, over the period of time since this government has been in office, they have adopted virtually none of

the amendments that have been forwarded by the opposition.

I would encourage the government to carefully consider the advice they're being given, not just by the opposition but by AMO and by other groups. Let's make sure that we have a bill that actually addresses the concerns of people in this province.

The Acting Speaker: I want to thank the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for her presentation this afternoon.

It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
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**Journal
des débats
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Tuesday 8 March 2005

Mardi 8 mars 2005



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 mars 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2005 and ending June 30, 2005, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation of the 2005-06 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to have debate for up to half an hour per caucus and that any vote would be deferred until tomorrow at deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there consent for what the government House leader has just proposed? Agreed.

I recognize the Minister of Finance to lead off.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I'm pleased to lead off this debate on the interim supply motion. It's traditional in the Legislature that these motions arise. As I said, the purpose of interim supply is simply to ensure that the government has the resources to pay its bills during a period before we have actually passed the supply motion and before a budget is presented. As is stated in the motion, this interim supply motion, if approved, simply provides the authority to pay our bills, to do things like send money to municipalities, hospitals and school boards around the province; to pay the benefits owing to people with disabilities; and to appropriate the payment of salaries to the dedicated people who work for this government across the province.

Generally, motions for interim supply give the finance minister the opportunity—I tell my friend from Trinity-Spadina, who is smiling—to reminisce a little bit about what the government has achieved over the course of the past year. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on that, but there are a couple of things I am particularly proud of over the course of the past fiscal year, which comes to an end on March 31.

I say to my friend from Trinity-Spadina, because he is a renowned education critic for his party, that I'm particularly proud of the changes we're bringing about in Ontario's public education system: the fact that there are

thousands of new teachers at all levels of the system, that we are working on a plan that has specialty teachers in numeracy and literacy across the province. If you just compare the mood in our schools to what it was prior to the election of October 2, 2003—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's night and day.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: —as my friend from Mississauga West says, it's night and day. I think we've made some real progress in our education system.

As well, we have made some tremendous progress in our health care system. We need to remember in this Legislature and in this province that health care represents 45% of all the revenue we spend in the programs that governments operate. It's a massive undertaking, some \$31 billion in expenditures per year. The changes, the improvements and the move toward a more responsive, community-based system have been the hallmark of the work of my colleague, the Minister of Health. Not that there's not a lot more to do; the transformation that's necessary in that sector is very significant indeed. But I think we've made very significant progress over the course of the past 16 months.

1850

The other thing I'd just like to point out, referring back to the budget I presented in this House on May 18 last year, is the fact that we began, through a new allocation of gas tax revenues, the process of funding what I believe, 10 or 15 years from now, will be a total transformation of public transit right across the province of Ontario. It's particularly important for the greater Toronto area where, every working day of the year, our streets become increasingly congested. With the allocation of two cents per litre of gas tax, ultimately, toward public transit, I think we are going to be providing the funding that will ultimately transform that system.

But enough of the past. As you know, the motion for interim supply deals with appropriations beginning April 1 for the next fiscal year. I want, in the time available to me—in anticipation of the budget, which will be presented in this Legislature in the fullness of time—to just share with my friends some of what I heard during my own pre-budget consultations.

As you know, Speaker, I had an opportunity to travel right across the province and into a variety of different communities. Let me put it this way: I have a particular affection for the 12 million-plus people for whom Ontario is home. When you have the honour and the luxury of going from community to community, sitting

and listening to people speak about what issues affect them in their daily lives and how an Ontario budget might help them, I must tell you, it is a moving experience indeed.

We started off in Peterborough. Although Peterborough is not known as the centre of agriculture in the province of Ontario, certainly it has a very significant agricultural base. It was the first time I had an opportunity to hear directly from the agricultural community about the devastating impact of the collapse of grain prices.

I don't think anyone works harder in the province than the men and women who cultivate the soil. We've just been through a terrible period with mad cow disease, the closing of our borders and a number of other circumstances that have hit at the income base. And after all that comes what can only be described as an international collapse of grain prices. In Peterborough I heard farmers say to me, "There's no value in planting our crops this year, because when we harvest them, given current grain prices, we won't be able to recover what it cost us to put the seed in the ground." Since that time, I've had discussions with my colleagues in cabinet and in caucus about the appropriate response this government should be taking to the plight of farmers across the province.

I had an opportunity to have a marvellous pre-budget consultation in Ottawa. I was reminded there again that an Ontario budget delivered by a Liberal government must address the interests and needs of those among us who are most vulnerable, whether because of disabilities or because of circumstances. The submissions made at that meeting will certainly be the part of our thinking as we prepare the budget.

By contrast, the meeting in Kitchener was filled with the vibrancy of a part of the province which is in the midst of an economic boom of great proportions. You think of a company like Research in Motion. Most of you are carrying around—indeed, Mr. Speaker, you're looking at your BlackBerry as I speak, but I'm sure it's off. I say to my friend from Trinity–Spadina that I'm sure the Speaker is not actually using his BlackBerry.

When you think about it, people all over the world now are communicating with this marvellous new device, and it's because of the genius and insight and determination and science of a group of people who are absolutely determined to keep that wonderful business anchored and located in the Kitchener-Waterloo region of this great province. The submissions there about making sure that this kind of vitality can be replicated in other businesses was the thing I was reminded about in the pre-budget consultation in Kitchener.

In Stoney Creek and New Liskeard and in several hearings in Toronto and Thunder Bay and Markham, the theme of the enormous vitality and enormous potential that is locked up in this province was repeated over and over again.

My time is limited here, but—

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): No, no. Take your time.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend from Trinity–Spadina says, "Take your time." I don't want to trouble him with all the submissions, but to sum up, I'll just tell him that the theme emerging from those pre-budget consultations was the capacity of government, deploying its resources wisely, to make a true difference, not just to our economic potential but to our potential as a people in all areas of activity: cultural, social, economic, community-based etc. I just want to say to you, Speaker, that it is my firm intention to make sure that when we present a budget in this Legislature, the people who participated in those consultations, and the 12 million people on whose behalf they were speaking, will see their own fingerprints on that budget, and it will reflect their aspirations in all areas of public enterprise and public undertaking.

I just want to wrap up with a theme that the Premier has been speaking about for well over a month in the province; that is, the emerging gap, the so-called \$23-billion gap, between what the federal government extracts from the province of Ontario in the form of taxes and levies and charges, and what it reinvests in the province in the form of transfer payments and transfers to governments and to individuals. I simply want to put on the record that when we speak about the \$23-billion gap, what we're really doing is inviting the federal government, with the surpluses that are now available to it, to begin to reinvest in the province of Ontario in areas like immigration; in areas like a labour market agreement; in areas like infrastructure, where the previous government left an enormous deficit, whether it's in our hydro sector or our hospitals or our schools, universities or community colleges—to reinvest in that kind of infrastructure, in this province's post-secondary system; to make the kind of investments in this great province that will ensure that Ontario continues to be the strong economic engine of this great country.

I have had an opportunity to meet personally with variety of federal ministers: the finance minister, Mr. Goodale, before he presented his budget; John McCallum, the revenue minister; Mr. Volpe, the immigration minister; and John Godfrey, the minister responsible for communities. I am feeling comforted that we are going to make some progress; not all in one day or in one decision or in one investment, but I'm beginning to feel that our message about the fact that Ontario needs further investment from the federal government certainly rings true right across this province and is being heard by the federal government. In that regard, I was delighted to hear that we may have a joint meeting of federal government ministers from Ontario and our own cabinet, and I think we should make some progress there.

Just in wrapping up on interim supply, I want to say that I look forward to presenting a budget in this Legislature in the near future that will ignite the great potential that exists throughout this marvellous province and that the inspiration I received from those who took the time to participate in the pre-budget consultations will continue to be my inspiration.

1900

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on interim supply. One of the joys of interim supply is the fact that you have wide latitude in terms of the subjects that can be raised during the debate. You can talk about virtually anything the government is doing or not doing. You can even talk about other parties, like the NDP, but I'm not going to spend any time on that, despite Mr. Marchese's pleadings.

I do want to talk about a number of things. I've been scratching out some thoughts here in the past few minutes. I know I won't have enough time to touch on everything we should and would perhaps like to address this evening, but there are a couple of things that I think should be raised during this opportunity for discussion about the finances and other aspects of government operations.

As you know, for the past couple of weeks we have been talking about the boundaries that have been announced for the greenbelt properties, which are quite extensive. I think it's fair to say the Progressive Conservative Party supports the establishment of a greenbelt in that part of Ontario. Our problem has been with the process. The member for Erie—Lincoln, Mr. Hudak, our representative on the committee dealing with the greenbelt, has described this as a greenbotch, and I think that in many respects that is a very accurate description.

We have been trying for some time to obtain the science behind the final drawing of the boundaries determining the greenbelt and have been unable to obtain that information. As a result, this is just one element that has raised very serious concerns about what process was used and how arbitrary the process was. We see it being drawn along county lines. That fuels the speculation about the fact that this was not real, applied science, in terms of the determination of boundaries, but more likely was political science which was drawn in the Premier's office. We're hearing more and more in the past few days and hours to confirm that.

One of the elements of this that we've been bringing to the attention of members of the assembly and the public at large is the fact that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who has carriage of this legislation, said some months ago that he would not meet with developers to discuss the boundaries of a greenbelt. Of course, as you and anyone paying attention to the goings-on and proceedings in this House know, we've since determined that indeed he did meet with at least one developer, who has written to the minister and indicated his thanks for the minister meeting with him and for allowing a parcel of property, which we have conservatively estimated to be valued at approximately \$15 million, to be exempted from the greenbelt boundaries, despite the fact pointed out by Mr. Silvio DeGasperis, the developer in question, that properties abutting his on both sides have similar landscapes and similar qualities in terms of waterways and so on. He asks the minister, "If I was exempted, why weren't these other tablelands

exempted?" I think it's a very legitimate question. When you tie this in to the fact that Mr. Silvio DeGasperis was one of a limited number of people who attended a private, very expensive dinner at the home of the brother of the Minister of Finance, at \$10,000 per person—again, where Mr. DeGasperis stresses to us and to others that the greenbelt boundaries were the primary subject of conversation at that very select and expensive, secret soiree. When you tie that in with the fact that the minister was confused or bewildered in terms of meeting with the developer—and I'm being kind here. Clearly, he has met with the developer and we know that Mr. DeGasperis, through his \$10,000 payment, was able to get the ear of the Premier and the Minister of Finance to discuss his concerns with respect to the ultimate boundaries of the greenbelt.

This raises the spectre of favouritism. We heard the Minister of the Environment, who was the Acting Premier in the House today, talk about this in terms of the fact that Mr. DeGasperis's primary concern at this meeting was the agricultural preserve in Pickering. That's the argument that the Acting Premier made and that the Minister of Housing has made on a number of occasions. She suggested—perhaps even more strongly than that—that this was a trade-off: "We can't exclude the agricultural preserve in Pickering; however, on the other hand, perhaps we can do something for you," and that is this property exempted, which is valued conservatively at \$15 million. That is what the Acting Premier said today. If you disagree, check Hansard. If she misspoke, she didn't get up and apologize and correct the record, and she had the opportunity to do that.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: You have no morals.

Mr. Runciman: The Minister of Finance is questioning my standards. The other day he sent me a note—he didn't sign it—questioning my integrity. I've been around here 24 years and I think my integrity is intact. When you're in opposition, sometimes you have to ask very difficult and tough questions, but that is the role of the loyal opposition. The government has no one to blame for this but themselves. Consider the optics surrounding this when they charge individuals \$10,000 for a secret soiree at the Minister of Finance's brother's home. They get upset; I can understand them being upset, but they have to understand the optics surrounding this and why that raises legitimate questions and why the opposition has a responsibility to raise those questions in the assembly of Ontario. The government should feel a responsibility to respond, which they do not. Instead, they question the integrity of members of the opposition who, in their view, have the gall to raise these issues. I believe we have the responsibility to raise these issues.

Mr. Marchese: The obligation.

Mr. Runciman: And the obligation—correct.

This comes from a government, a party whose leader, when sitting in this chair, occupying this desk, was sued for slandering a member of the government of the day; a civil suit for slander, which he had to ultimately admit and pay the legal fees and indicate, "Yes, I did slander a

member of the government.” That’s the party that’s now accusing us of lacking integrity because we ask legitimate questions, which I think are important, or should be important, at the very least, to the taxpayers of Ontario. So I make no apologies.

I indicated after question period the other day that I have difficulty with this sort of question and I do, but it is our responsibility. Those of you who have sat in opposition, who are not going to be holier than thou, understand that and appreciate it, although you may not be willing to state it, given your current circumstances.

I have a couple of other things that I wanted to mention with respect to this. We not only know that the minister met with Mr. DeGasperis, we also know that the Premier’s principal secretary, his senior political adviser, also met with Mr. DeGasperis on four separate occasions in an effort at damage control and political cover. I saw the Minister of Finance running around on the third floor talking to members of the media, trying to pre-empt the opposition, saying, “Well, you know, it wasn’t just Mr. MacNaughton. This is all innocent.” But the Premier also met with Mr. DeGasperis. Don Guy, the chief of staff to the Premier, also met with Mr. DeGasperis. Now this is all innocent.

1910

However, let’s look at a comment the Minister of Municipal Affairs made in this House in response to a question I asked him with respect to meeting with Mr. DeGasperis. He said, “Maybe I did meet with him but I didn’t meet with anybody after August 2004. The maps were drawn, the lines were drawn. The process, the recommendations, came back to us in July. I didn’t meet with anybody after August. It wasn’t appropriate to meet with anyone, after August, who had an interest in the development of these properties.” That’s essentially what the Minister of Municipal Affairs said.

Now we know that the principal secretary to the Premier met with Mr. DeGasperis after this cut-off time, which your own minister has set. Your own minister established this cut-off date: “It’s not appropriate to talk to anyone with development interests after the end of July.” He said it in this House. But now we know the principal secretary, after this date, met with Mr. DeGasperis. We know that the Premier and his chief of staff met with Mr. DeGasperis after this date.

The minister was asked in the House today, with respect to Mr. MacNaughton, “Was it appropriate? You said it wasn’t appropriate for you, the minister responsible for carriage of this. Is it appropriate for the chief political adviser in the Premier’s office to meet with this man, this developer, this significant property holder?” He refused again to answer this, to be upfront and accountable to the people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, who like to believe that the boundaries of the greenbelt have some legitimacy, that money didn’t have any influence with respect to the drawing of these boundaries. We didn’t get that kind of response and we haven’t had it from any member of that government to date.

We asked for a legislative inquiry today. It has happened in the past. It happened with Evelyn Gigantes. It happened with René Fontaine. It happened with Elinor Caplan. A couple of those were in minority government situations, which I guess speaks to the advantages sometimes of minority situations.

We are being stonewalled in the House. The government is trying to pre-empt us by having the Minister of Finance run around to the media today, saying, “Yes, the Premier did meet and his chief of staff met, but this was all innocent. We told him we weren’t going to give him what he wants. Come on, folks. This is all friendly stuff.” Yet, they will not release the names of the people who attended this secret Sorbara soirée at \$10,000 a head. They won’t release that. We’ve been told by Susanna Kelley at TVO that at least seven of the attendees at this function have very strong connections to the development industry or are developers themselves.

This is a growing scandal and I think it’s incumbent upon the government to lay everything on the table. Let’s get the facts out there in the public. Let’s have a real understanding of what happened here. Is this influence-buying? Is this money that really impacted on the decisions of the boundary, or was this appropriate? I think these are legitimate questions, which have been provoked by your lack of responses in this House and your actions that preceded it. You can’t blame this on us. You sat over here, screamed and yelled at us for two and a half years about these kinds of issues. This is worse. You want to impugn our integrity and not question your own with respect to these matters.

This is an issue that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Will the Leader of the Opposition take his seat for a second.

I would ask all members to observe decorum in the House so that we can get through the evening.

I would ask the member for Simcoe–Grey to refrain from heckling while his leader is speaking.

Mr. Runciman: This is an issue, as I said, that is not going to go away. We’re going to continue to pursue this. I think it’s in the interests of the taxpayers of Ontario—

Mr. Marchese: What about citizens?

Mr. Runciman: —and certainly the interests of citizens at large.

I want to move on to a couple of other subjects while I have some time. We know that a few weeks ago the Premier admitted defeat with respect to a balanced budget, a promise made by the Liberal Party of Ontario and, I think, made in the last budget of Minister Sorbara: “We will balance the budget by the end of our term in office in 2007.” The Premier, when he was up in the riding that is now looking at a by-election, said, “No, I have to say that that ain’t going to happen, folks. That’s another promise that we can’t meet.” Of course, he wants to blame all sorts of other people for his failure to meet that promise. Certainly that is the game plan for this government: to blame someone, to blame everyone for their own failings. That’s a consistent message coming

from the Liberal Party of Ontario, the current government of Ontario. After only—what?—17 months, 18 months, a year and a half in office: “We’re admitting defeat, throwing up our hands and saying that we can’t win this battle.”

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): We had an \$11-billion deficit.

Mr. Runciman: Yes, my colleague indicates that we had an \$11-billion deficit when we formed government. Through some very tough and difficult measures, we were able to bring that under control and balance the budget for a number of years in a row and, obviously, suffered some political damage as a result of that. But we did what was right for the people of Ontario and didn’t take the politically easy way out by increasing taxes, increasing deficits and admitting defeat a year and half into our mandate.

One of my colleagues was suggesting that it’s like Winston Churchill during the Second World War, when the Nazis invaded France, saying, “It’s all over, folks. We can’t win. It’s all over. Let’s wave the white flag.”

You’re into the war, in the early days, and here is a significant battle that you should be prepared to take on, but it is a battle, it’s tough. Those of us who have been in government know how difficult it can be, with the financial pressures, especially in the health care sector. But you don’t want to take on that fight. You want to take the easy road, the easy way, and simply continue to spend, spend, spend and increase the deficit and encumber future generations in the province. That is the easy way out. And it is a typical Liberal way out.

I was around here before, when the Liberals were in office, as was Minister Sorbara. During the five years of the Peterson government in Ontario, they almost doubled spending. In five short years in office, they almost doubled spending. They had about 32 or 33 tax increases during that five-year term of office. These folks are going down the same path. It was 9% their first year, and their spending is probably going to be increased over 9% this year. What are we talking about? We’re talking about an 18% to 20% increase in the spending of the provincial government in two years in office. That is a shameful record in terms of coming to grips with the challenges that this province faces.

Instead, they want to increase the deficit and blame somebody else. Blame your predecessor. When that starts to get tired, let’s blame the federal government. Let’s blame the Federal Liberals. Well, that doesn’t wash with the public of Ontario either. That does not wash, especially when you look at the track record of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

In the year 2000, the Harris government had a resolution before this House that was calling on the federal government, in terms of the federal fiscal arrangements, to give Ontario a fairer deal in confederation. We believe there need to be changes, not just in equalization but in all of the federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. What kind of a response did we get from the Liberals when

they were sitting over here? They spoke against it vehemently, called it fed-bashing, no merit, a blame game.

Mr. Wilson: We’re whiners.

Mr. Runciman: We’re whiners.

Mr. Marchese: I remember that.

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Mr. Runciman: The members of the current cabinet, the executive council, virtually every one of them, spoke against it and voted against it. Now all of a sudden, when they can’t get their own spending under control, can’t meet all of these wild and crazy promises they made to the electorate during the election campaign, say, “It’s those damned Liberals in Ottawa. They’re not treating us fairly.” They’re whining; they’re fed-bashing day after day.

I’ve heard they have even set up a war room in the Whitney Block and hired Warren Kinsella to operate the war room against the federal Liberals—Warren Kinsella, who, as we know, hates Paul Martin, so he will really lust after this job.

Mr. Marchese: And he’s getting paid to do it.

Mr. Runciman: And he’s getting paid a significant amount of money per diem to fight Paul Martin. They’re hoping these guys are going to save their bacon. They can’t save it because they’re not willing to govern. They don’t know how to govern. They don’t have a plan. We’ve said day after day that what they are doing is writing things out on the back of a napkin. I think it’s closer to the truth when we look at the greenbelt especially, but perhaps it applies to other policies. What they are doing is writing out their plan on the back of a cheque, and with respect to the greenbelt, a \$10,000 cheque. It’s a shameful, shameful, shameful record after only 18 months in government, and the people of Ontario are recognizing it.

In a poll done by SCS which was released about three weeks ago, people were asked, unprompted, “How would you describe Premier McGuinty? What word or combination of words come to mind when you think of Premier Dalton McGuinty?” Forty-one per cent of the respondents, unprompted, used one word, and it starts with a capital “I.” It would be unparliamentary for me to use that word in this assembly, but I think everyone listening in Parliament tonight and those viewing and listening to us during this debate understands that Mr. McGuinty was described by 41% of the respondents, unprompted, with a four-letter word that starts with “I.”

The Acting Speaker: I would ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary comment. You can’t say indirectly what you can’t say directly.

Mr. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, I’ll respect your wishes and withdraw.

I’m very concerned about the financial situation in the province of Ontario, and I think more and more people are going to be concerned as we proceed through the next number of months.

We’ve seen issues in the manufacturing sector. The labour minister is bringing in legislation which I think is alarming significant numbers in the business community.

They are doing real damage to the investment climate in this province. I think we are going to see growing alarm about this government's spending practices, its taxation practices, its efforts to change labour laws in the province, which again discourage job growth and investment.

Talking about the financial situation, there's the doctors' agreement. We know the minister has talked about an additional \$120 million, a sweetener that's been thrown in. "This is the final offer." We heard that a number of months ago: "Final offer. You're not getting any more from us." Of course now, three or four months later, we've thrown in another \$120 million. That's just a sop for the civil suit against the bullying of the doctors in the province, I guess, but we don't really know. That \$120 million is the figure being bandied about by the minister. The incorporation of doctors: We're not sure of the costs. The government is speculating \$15 million on an annualized basis. It may be significantly more. I've heard \$100 million to \$200 million. It depends, obviously, on the number of doctors who ultimately decide to incorporate. There are also the salary caps and what that will mean. The projections in terms of costs, we do not know.

The CUPE deal just arrived at is 3%. We yet have teachers and nurses. I think we should all be concerned about where this is all heading and what the end result might be in terms of the financial condition of this province. I mention the inability of the former Liberal government, the Peterson government, to control spending and the result, that the NDP inherited a situation where we were running into a recession, which no one knew about except Mr. Peterson.

That's why he called an early election. He knew what was happening, and he didn't want to go to the people and tell the truth. Three and half years into his mandate, he called an early election. And of course, the NDP walked in the door and found out that we were facing a recession. I don't agree with their response, which was to try, as a province, to spend their way out of it. That was inappropriate, and I suspect if they were sitting around having a beer with me later, they'd agree it was an inappropriate response. It might have changed their ultimate destiny in terms of the duration of their government.

In any event, I think we should all be concerned. The LHINs—the local health integration networks—are, again, resulting in the closure of district health councils, which are essentially volunteers who have done great work for the people of the province. They've been thrown out, tossed out on their ear. We don't know what the severances will be with respect to that. We know that they're advertising for CEOs for LHINs at salaries in the neighbourhood of a quarter of a million dollars a year, even though we don't know what the mandate of LHINs will be at this point in time. Again, it's a reflection on the lack of planning and the arbitrariness of this Liberal government.

The other element—there are CCACs; we don't know their future—is the impact on the boards of governors of

local hospitals. There's a strong suspicion that these people are going to undermine and perhaps remove local input and local boards of governors in hospitals in communities that we all care for.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): No autonomy.

Mr. Runciman: "No autonomy," as my colleague and former Minister of Health says.

So that, again, should be a concern. These people seem to be feeling their way in the dark in many of these areas, which we're all going to pay for, and pay heavily, I'm afraid.

Quickly, I want to talk about agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture is in the House, and I hope he doesn't start yelling at me. I represent a riding that has a strong rural component, and he knows as well as I do that these are extremely difficult times for the farming community and for people who live in rural Ontario.

We can talk about the farming community, and we raise their issues on a regular basis. We've had an opposition day sponsored by our party in the House to make sure those issues are elevated in the assembly, and we've been critical of the government for the fact that they made a promise during the election campaign that agriculture would be a lead ministry. Then the first thing they did was cut its budget by 20%. I think the minister, if he were being frank about it, would indicate his own frustration with respect to his colleagues and the fact that they haven't given him the support that he merits and requires to make sure that we adequately address the real concerns.

It's not just farmers; it's the rural way of life. We'll see that frustration expressed here tomorrow with the tractor protest, as it's called. We can knock these folks—I know some of them, and they have legitimate concerns about a way of life in this province which is being lost when you have the Ministry of Health coming in and saying you can't have a potluck dinner, or when the church hall or community hall is threatened because of water regulations and Big Brother coming in and saying, "You can't do that," and government being influenced and controlled by urban Ontario, people who have never been to a potluck dinner in their lives and who have no appreciation or understanding of what the rural life is all about. These are the people who are controlling this place, regrettably. If you take a look at the executive council of the Liberal government, how many members are from Toronto? I think it's 10, at least 10.

Mr. Wilson: Only three from rural areas.

Mr. Runciman: "Only three from rural areas," my colleague tells me. They don't have a voice in this government; they are not a lead ministry. I don't want to be critical of the minister. I like him. I consider him a friend. I think he has a very tough job to do in the current circumstances. He doesn't have the support around that cabinet table. These folks are what I call Toronto-centric. I don't want to knock Toronto either, but I don't think they understand, they don't appreciate and, from the perception of people in rural Ontario, they don't care.

They don't care because there are not enough seats there, there are not enough votes there. That's the reality. You're not going to win government looking after rural Ontario.

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You've got to look after the big cities, you've got to look after the urban areas. That's their priority. Those are their lead ministries, not agriculture, not rural life in this province. But those of us who care about the history of this province, the heritage of this province and the future of this province think it is important, and we're going to continue to fight for rural Ontario and the farming community in Ontario.

I have exhausted my time. I can't believe it. I have another three or four pages to go, but I'll have to reserve it for a later time. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr. Marchese: I'm happy to participate in this debate around interim supply. I just want to welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel at 7:30. I've got about 25 minutes or so. I hope that you're going to sit back, have a glass of wine or a beer, if that's what you like—for me, it would be a glass of red wine and some popcorn, some cheese, some olives, some prosciutto—and enjoy the rest of this time, because it's a fun place.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's live too.

Mr. Marchese: And it's live. We are all live.

This interim supply bill is about money, and I want to talk about money. I want to say this to you, Minister: I want to admit to a weakness. I have a bias and a weakness for liking the Minister of Finance, so it's a problem. It's a real problem because, when you like people, you just don't know how to go after them. I want to tell you, you're a lucky guy. But your government is not going to be as lucky because I'm going to attack you as best I can in the next 25 minutes.

I want to begin by making reference to the fact that the Minister of Finance talked about what great things they're doing in education. Here's what they're doing. The Minister of Education, just last July, announces at the end of the school year \$100 million for special ed, something that boards were awaiting for approximately seven months—seven to 10 months, they argue. The Minister of Education waits and waits and waits, and when does he announce the 100 million bucks, the money they were entitled to, that they all signed off on? At the end of July. Not even the end of June, when they might be able to sign a couple of cheques and get some expenditures out of the way, but in July, when the children and the teachers are not in the classroom. They're not in school.

What does the Minister of Education then do? In August, he takes that \$100 million away from the boards, so that we are now in a revenue-neutral situation. He, in effect, has given no money for special ed.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Calm down, Rosario.

Mr. Marchese: Not only that, David; he says that 50 million bucks of that 100 million that he stole, that he took away, is going to be made available to the boards—money they were entitled to before July. And guess what? You know, Speaker, because your wife is a teacher; she's been waiting for that application that Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education, said would be available in November. We are now in March. He takes \$100 million from the boards, says he would make \$50 million available, would produce some kind of application process, and the money would just roll back.

We don't even have an application yet in process, and we are in March. April, May and June are coming. It'll be the end of the year, and guess what? The Minister of Education is going to announce not the \$50 million of the \$100 million he stole from the boards, but another \$100 million by the end of this July, and none of that money will flow because it's all about a game that Liberals love to contrive around. They are great at conniving and allowing people to believe that they're doing something good for you when, in effect, they give and they take. They announce millions and millions of dollars that never get delivered. It's a brilliant Liberal strategy. That's what they're good at, and they are good at this. They are amongst the best in this place. They are fooling people, but I'm telling you, Minister of Finance, it's coming to an end. It is so beautiful to witness.

This is a Minister of Education who, when he was in opposition, talked about, "Oh, my God, the Tories are leaving us with 42,000 kids waiting on special education lists, kids who need the attention, who need to do better, who need to be assessed by psychologists." It wouldn't happen if Gerard Kennedy was the Minister of Education. Oh, no. That waiting list would be eliminated in no time.

He gets elected, and that list is growing by the day. That \$100 million he gave in July, he took away in August, and nothing is coming our way. And those poor special education kids that the minister has a heart for? Well, they just have to wait a little longer, because I guess he really cares but he just doesn't seem to have the money. That's the Minister of Education, the guy with a heart; that's Premier McGuinty, the guy with a bigger heart; and that's the Minister of Finance, who has a heart too, all contriving together to give and to take, and then people are left waiting for the money they so desperately need: special education kids, kids who are needy and have either a physiological problem, a psychological problem or a combination of both that makes them vulnerable. What does Kennedy, the Minister of Education, do now that he's in government? "You can wait."

On transportation, the Minister of Education said, "We've got a new formula coming your way, and, by the way, it's a draft." But, lo and behold, this draft gives all the boards a 2% increase. He says to approximately 40 boards, "You're going to get a down payment this year and an increase in September," and then he says to the other 30 boards, "You're getting the 2% increase, but

come September you're getting a decrease." So this funding formula change for transportation purposes that we were waiting for from the Minister of Education who's got a heart, it ain't coming. In fact, he took some money from some boards and gave it to others, and he calls that the equity transportation fund. No kidding. I asked him in committee, "Did you come up with that title?" He said no, and he turned around to ask his staff how it came about that they had this new title called the equity fund, which he calls a draft. How can a draft be such that some boards are getting money this year and the rest next year, and the other 30 boards are going to get a cut in September? How can that be a draft?

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Do you know what a draft is?

Mr. Marchese: Yeah, a draft is a beer. And that's what our citizens are doing right now, enjoying the fact that we New Democrats are exposing the sham. That's what they're enjoying with that draft. That's what this is about. It's about exposing—now, Speaker, don't get carried away. Just enjoy yourself.

Lisa, where are you going? All right. Are we okay? We're not?

The Acting Speaker: I would like to ask the member for Trinity-Spadina to keep his language within the realm of parliamentary acceptability. Thank you.

Mr. Marchese: You're absolutely right, Speaker, and that's what it's about. I try to stay as clean as I can, as antiseptic as I can, with my language, because that's what this place is all about.

Then we have the Liberals talking about school closures. Remember the Minister of Education implementing a moratorium last year?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It worked well.

Mr. Marchese: Yeah, it worked really well. He said to the boards, "You've got a moratorium in place, but, by the way, there ain't no money coming your way." How can small schools stay open without what I call in Latin the pecunia? How can you do that without having extra money for a principal, who doesn't qualify if you don't have the numbers? How can you do that without extra pecunia? Just implementing a moratorium doesn't do it. Even Liberals understand that, I think.

Mr. Patten: Of course.

Mr. Marchese: When the members say, "Of course," they contribute to the contrivance of the Liberal politics that say, "We're keeping your small school open but we've got no money for you." And Liberals understand again.

I attended a press conference a couple of weeks ago where the Premier and the Minister of Education went to Vaughan high school and said, "We've got 280 million bucks to leverage \$2 billion of capital projects, and by the way"—

Mr. Leal: Hope is on the way.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, hope is on the way—"small schools will be able to stay open."

How? How can giving money for capital projects help small schools when they need extra money for prin-

cipals? They need extra dollars to reduce the class size so you don't have three or four classes in one. How can you get the extra money for a secretary, a librarian, a gym teacher or music teachers? You understand what I'm saying, right, Liberals?

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Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: My friend from Hamilton East understands because she's a New Democrat. But I understand why Liberals wouldn't understand that or wouldn't want to understand that. It's part of that contrivance.

So small schools cannot stay open because you announced \$280 million for capital projects that will never materialize, and I'll tell you why.

Mr. Leal: Why? Tell us.

Mr. Marchese: Because last May, your Minister of Education, the guy with the heart, announced \$200 million for capital projects and none of that money flowed. Now he is announcing \$280 million, and I'm saying to you, citizens, that money ain't going to flow. That's what Liberals do. They just keep on making big announcements and people hope that money will flow. The guy with the heart, the Minister of Education, says, "In the next 18 months, some of this money we are committing will flow." Maybe, but we don't know, because we have an example of a minister who announced \$200 million last year, and not one cent of that money was channelled through the right channels.

Small schools will close. I guarantee that to you, Liberal members, and you can bank on it. Go to your friends in your ridings and tell them that. Tell them Marchese said, "The Minister of Education with a heart doesn't have a cent to keep small schools open."

By the way, do you remember your Liberal promises, the feel-good promises you made called Government That Works for You? The now-Minister of Education said in his education platform, "We are going to have an education finance committee so that people know what we're giving and what we're spending on education." It's almost two years into the mandate. Has anybody heard from Mr. Kennedy, the Minister of Education, about that education finance committee? No.

Mr. Leal: He's working on it.

Mr. Marchese: Working on it? Liberals working on it means an eternity. It never will come.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): You're a cynic.

Mr. Marchese: A big one. But let's see what the Liberals said about cynicism. I've got McGuinty here. He says, "Nothing inspires me more than the opportunity to combat the cynicism that far too many people feel about Ontario politics." Dalton McGuinty, the Premier—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I got you there. The Premier said, "People have lost faith in their politicians and their institutions of government," and he is going to fix that, eh, David? You're yawning with excitement. I know that. You are yawning so much with excitement that I want to tell you about the \$10,000 dinner that you guys had just a

short little while ago. I love the way the member from Leeds–Grenville says, “That soiree.” He says it so well. You notice how he says “soiree”? It’s beautiful. It’s a \$10,000 meal. I’ve got to tell you there’s a problem, David. Oh, no, it’s not David; it’s the member from Willowdale. You see, I am getting there. I am working with you, Speaker, me and you together.

Ten thousand bucks. Can you imagine a \$10,000 dinner? For my little mind—because I’m a little guy, right? I come from a family of modest means. Ten thousand bucks—do you know what that will cover? It covers two years of tuition fees at these rates, \$5,000 a pop. Do you know how hard it is to find that kind of money? Do you know how hard it is finding the money, 5,000 bucks per student, to get to university? Do you know how hard it is for that student to find it? It’s hard. But no, all you need is a \$10,000 cheque.

What’s wrong, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: It’s a prop.

Mr. Marchese: It’s a prop? OK. All you need is a \$10,000 cheque, right? It’s right here. It’s in my pocket. You just get it right out and you go to that beautiful soiree.

I’ve got to tell you, the food can’t be all that good, right? Maybe it was lasagna. I love lasagna, but I know how much it costs to make a lasagna because I’ve done it myself. I love making lasagna, but it doesn’t cost that kind of money.

Ten thousand bucks. I remember attacking the Tories for having \$700 dinners, and I remember attacking the Liberals for having \$600 dinners. I used to say, then, “What’s the difference between one party and the other? One hundred bucks.” Seven-hundred-dollar dinners, \$600 dinners. What’s the difference? One hundred bucks.

And do you know what? The same people go to the same parties. We’re talking about DeGasperi. He probably ran to Tory dinners as he goes to the Liberal dinners, and he probably donated as much money to the Tories as he’s donating to the Liberals, because developers have no allegiance to a political party. But they love the Tories and they love the Liberals. They’ll give to both parties, and they’ll go to whatever party is called by any one of them.

But 10,000 bucks? I’m telling you, a whole lot of little people—

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Sir? You’ve got a problemo? Not you, the guy at the back.

Ten thousand dollars. Minister of Finance, you’ve got to—Minister of Finance? I’m just trying to—

The Acting Speaker: One of the other conventions we’re supposed to observe here is that you’re supposed to speak through the Chair. If you would please do that, it would be most sincerely appreciated.

Mr. Marchese: Of course. Ten thousand bucks; I’m telling you.

So I attack Tories and Liberals for the kind of dinners they have, because I have events that used to be \$25 dollars. Do you know how hard it is to get people in my

riding to come to a \$25 event? Do you know how hard that is? It’s hard. It’s not just like going to a dentist. It’s like going to an orthodontist. It’s worse than going to a dentist, I’m telling you. When people have to come to an NDP event paying 35 bucks or 50 bucks, it’s like pulling teeth. It’s hard.

So you can understand, for a little guy like me, thinking you’ve got to pay 10,000 bucks to go to some soiree, I’ve got to tell you, a whole lot of people out there think this is weird stuff. It’s worse than going from 700-buck or \$600-a-pop dinners. This reminds me of Emeril the cook. Do you guys know Emeril the cook? It’s like going from \$700 a pop, and then he goes, “Bam,” and all of a sudden it’s \$10,000. You’ve got to turn it up a notch, right? Bam. What next?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Kick it up a notch.

Mr. Marchese: “Kick it up a notch,” that’s what he says. Can you believe it? The Liberal Party just kicked it up a notch. Bam. Ten thousand bucks a pop. I tell you, a whole lot of people in my riding think this is not nice.

McGuinty says he’s going to deal with cynicism; people have lost faith in their politicians and their institutions of government. I don’t think so. I just don’t believe that.

I’m not feeling good about this. What it means is, if I’ve got 10,000 bucks, I can go and meet the Premier and some other bigwigs in the Liberal Party. All of a sudden, when we’re dealing with the greenbelt, we’re not dealing with a greenbelt any more; we’re dealing with a green-back kind of influence. It’s not greenbelt, it’s green-back—money. That’s what it is. The science is, follow the money. The science is, follow the greenback. That’s what the science is.

If you’ve got the Minister of Municipal Affairs saying, “We’re dealing with the science,” it’s all yak-yak. Everybody understands that it’s about 10,000 bucks, and that if you deposit \$10,000 in the little pot as you enter that soiree, the line all of a sudden gets moved. The greenbelt moves. Because money moves, money talks. So trees are in, and then you get this, and all of a sudden trees are out. Then concrete is in and grass is out. That’s what we’re talking about.

Mr. Zimmer: What about big union money?

Mr. Marchese: Willowdale, here’s big union money right here. Ten thousand a pop and the line just changes from grass to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity–Spadina is giving a highly entertaining speech, and I would like to hear it. I would ask all members of the House to refrain from heckling him so that I can hear him.

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Mr. Marchese: I feel the same way. They’re just so loud, I can’t even hear myself. It’s unbelievable. But it’s about that cheque I just gave away, right? You deposit the cheque and, presto, the line moves. Grass is out; concrete is in. Trees are out; asphalt comes in. All you

need is to come in with a little cheque. Come on, Minister of Finance, I'm not after you, because I like you. But 10,000 bucks, I'm telling you, is not good. It don't look good. It contributes—

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: So you say your principles would be for sale for \$10,000. Is that what you're telling us?

Mr. Marchese: No, no. I'm saying your principles are for sale for 10,000 bucks.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Marchese: I withdraw that, Speaker.

What is offensive to me is that someone could come into a place with 12 people and bring 10,000 bucks as a contribution to a political party. That's offensive to me. Whether it has influence and how much influence it has, I don't know, but it has a lot of influence. Ten thousand dollars has a lot of influence on politicians. How can you go anywhere and say that \$10,000 means nothing? You bring a hundred bucks, you bring 200 bucks, I'm telling you, that wouldn't offend me so much. Even 500 bucks wouldn't offend me so much. You bring 10,000 bucks to a dinner, that is offensive to me, and it is offensive to anyone out there watching the proceedings.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: How much did you get from CUPE this year?

Mr. Marchese: How much did the NDP—Liberals get as much from unions as New Democrats get—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina, please take your seat. I've got a point of order over here.

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Aside from the needless repetition, the member for Trinity-Spadina appears to be making an allegation against the Minister of Finance. Indeed, he repeatedly imputes the fact that the Minister of Finance has a heart, which any member trying to get money from the Minister of Finance will know is simply not true.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has the floor.

Mr. Marchese: I want to thank the member for his irrelevant motion.

I am telling you that citizens are offended with that kind of contribution that they make to any political party. We thought that the Tories were bad. When Liberals accept \$10,000 to come to a little party, that is as bad if not worse than what they could do. Why? Because it wasn't even public; it was a little private affair. That's even worse. Because in a public event, at least you know who is going and who is paying and you can see them going into the place. In this little soiree, you don't even know. It's as bad if not worse than what Tories would do. Don't give me that crap.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask you to withdraw that. That is not dignifying the debate. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Marchese: I withdraw "crap."

Then you've got York University. Forty-two acres of land are given away to a developer who has close contacts to someone else who is on the board deciding who

gets the contract. It's not even a bidding process. They didn't even bid for that land. And you've got people at the university saying, "That's OK because this developer has the sensitivities we need to develop the land." What kind of politics is this? It's being harvested in this kind of environment. I'm telling you, it's wrong.

Six hundred and fifteen houses have been approved. Each one, when you break it down by way of costs, is worth \$24,000. The house value for such a place, or the land value, would be about 200,000 bucks. This developer gets a sweetheart deal. They don't have to go into a bidding process.

All of this is happening in this kind of climate. I'm telling you, talk about cynicism. It's really, really bad. We're contributing to a terrible environment in terms of how the corporate sector has as much influence on the Liberal Party as they did on the Tories. The same politics applies. I have no faith in this Liberal government to change what the Tories were doing. You have the Tories giving the CEO of Hydro One close to \$1 million in wages, then you've got the Minister of Energy giving the same amount—\$750,000, close to \$1 million—in salary to the new CEO of Hydro One. How is that any different? It's the same politics. You just changed the colour.

What individual in the public sector is worth \$750,000? The Premier only makes about \$160,000 a year. He's responsible for a whole lot, and he's under attack day in and day out—including the Minister of Finance. This guy, the CEO of Hydro One, is getting \$750,000 a year in salary, including who knows what, and that's OK with the Liberals.

Mr. Delaney: So you think we should pay the Premier \$750,000?

Mr. Marchese: "Should we pay the Premier \$750,000?"—as if my point wasn't clear. I don't know what I'm saying that isn't clear to you. Where is this member from? This guy here is from Mississauga West. Holy cow. Please, go back to your seat. That would solve it.

Your politics are just as bad as the Tories'. When it comes to breeding cynicism, you're no different.

I leave you fine citizens with these thoughts. I know some of my Liberal friends don't like it, and I tried not to name anyone, because that's not nice. But it involves the whole Liberal Party here—it does. It involves the corporate sector, in terms of its ability to get a hearing, and it doesn't come cheap.

I leave the next few minutes to my friend from Hamilton East, who wants to raise so many other points. I apologize to her for taking more time than I needed to.

Ms. Horwath: It's a good backdrop that my colleague has set for the comments that I want to make. It being International Women's Day, I think there are some important issues that need to be raised about who doesn't have the ear of this government. It's certainly the women of our province. I'm going to tell you why I say that. If you look at what this government has not done, in terms of doing the right thing by the women of this province, there are many, many things.

I had the pleasure this morning of attending an event in Hamilton at the Dofasco Centre for the Arts, the Theatre Aquarius venue. There was an excellent half day put on by a number of different sponsors, and I want to quickly mention them: Caribana food market; the Canadian Human Rights Commission; Fortinos Hamilton west and east; Hamilton Status of Women Committee; Metis Women's Circle; Native Women's Centre; Sexual Assault Centre, Hamilton and area; St. Joseph Immigrant Women's Centre; Status of Women Canada, Hamilton chapter; Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative; Catholic Family Services; Settlement and Integration Services Organization; access and equity group from the corporate services section of the city of Hamilton; the Sudanese League of Hamilton; Women's Centre of Hamilton; and Ryerson United Church.

Do you know what? The first speaker who got up to speak at International Women's Day celebrations in Hamilton pilloried this government for their lack of action on women's issues on International Women's Day. The first comment they made was about the lack of response of this government to their own promise in terms of getting rid of the clawback on the national child benefit. I can tell you, that's on the top of women's minds. It's not on the top of the minds of women who have \$10,000 to pay to attend a soiree put on by one of the Liberal cabinet ministers. No, it's not on those women's minds. It's on the minds of women who are living in poverty in community after community across this province.

If there's one thing that this government could do to affect the lot of women living in poverty, it would be getting rid of that national child benefit supplement clawback, actually living up to the promise that this government made.

That's not the only way that this government is failing women. In Hamilton, we have a serious problem: We're losing second-stage housing units in Hamilton. I've brought this up with the minister. I've raised it in question period. To this day, we are still in a crisis situation with transitional housing units, called second-stage housing, currently being delivered by Family Services Hamilton. Why? The stand-alone board that used to be responsible for this service could no longer take responsibility for it, because they could not get a commitment from the provincial government to fund this service. We had 30 units of this transitional housing in

Hamilton; we now have only 28. I'm urging this government to do the right thing by women on International Women's Day, by making a commitment to family services so that they can continue to fund second-stage service.

But that's not the only thing. This government has made a lot of noise and a lot of talk about services for children. They've talked about not-for-profit child care. I haven't seen it yet. I'm hoping they do the right thing when it comes to child care. I'm hoping that it is actually going to be not-for-profit, but I'm not hearing yet that this government is making that commitment. Why? Because the same people who tend to go to these soirees and have the money to spend \$500, \$600, \$700—\$10,000—on a soiree are not the ones who are going to be providing not-for-profit child care. I'm wondering if there isn't a bit of an agenda there in terms of who does and who doesn't get to get the money from the provincial government to provide child care services.

But not only that; it's similar to the shell game that was described by my colleague. The shell game is this: The provincial government gets money from the federal government. The provincial government then says, "We're going to be funding these great child care programs." But guess what? They didn't spend any of their own money on those child care programs; they spent the federal government's money on those programs. The bottom line is, it's subterfuge that is inappropriate in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the agreement of the House, I'm now going to move forward with the vote on the motion.

Mr. Sorbara has moved government notice of motion number 318. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Peters has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2002.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)		Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
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Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Robert W. (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint		
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Delaney, Bob (L)
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre		Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto–Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
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Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 9 March 2005

Mercredi 9 mars 2005



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 mars 2005

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LANDFILL

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to welcome the citizens of rural Ontario who are here today trying to get the attention of the McGuinty government, which so far doesn't seem to know they exist. Again the Minister of Agriculture managed to duck the event.

These farmers will appreciate an issue that I've been fighting this government on since it was elected back in 2003. The issue is the proposed landfill site in Tiny township known as site 41. Thousands of signed petitions, thousands of letters and a private member's bill paralleling the Adams Mine Lake Act have all been ignored by the government.

The final design for site 41 is awaiting approval. Environment Minister Leona Dombrowsky has talked in this House about how her government's greenbelt legislation protects farmland, but will she protect the very farmland upon which the landfill is supposed to exist? Site 41, among other things, is an example of class 1 farmland literally going to waste. Will she protect the landfill from potential groundwater contamination? I hope the minister has watched the video I sent her some time ago that shows overflowing wells on the property of site 41. The video paints a telling picture of the potential for groundwater contamination if the property is developed as a landfill.

In response to my application for a review of site 41's certificate of approval, Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller said the following in his 2003 report: "The ECO believes that a broad review of the site 41 C of A was warranted to increase government accountability for environmental decision-making on this highly contentious proposal. It would have been appropriate for the Ministry of the Environment to evaluate the certificate of approval in light of the province's intention to strengthen source water protection requirements."

I ask the minister to remember this, and her own words about improving source water protection in this province: Minister, if you care about protecting farmland, if you care about protecting our water, you will stop site

41 now. If you care about the citizens of rural Ontario, show an example and stop site 41 once and for all.

KIDSABILITY

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I was delighted recently to attend the opening of KidsAbility's newly expanded centre in Guelph. KidsAbility provides treatment for children with physical challenges, developmental delays and autism.

Our local KidsAbility has a unique partnership with the city of Guelph. They are located at the West End Community Centre, allowing special-needs kids easy access to all the recreational facilities enjoyed by other kids in Guelph, but their treatment space was woefully cramped. With support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, KidsAbility has recently expanded, with five times the amount of space, including their own waiting/reception area, seven child-friendly assessment and therapy rooms, and a family resource centre. They've also added new services, including the SPOT program, which offers therapy support for children attending licensed child care, funded through Wellington county by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. They've added Together for Kids with Disabilities, a project which improves access to recreation and leisure opportunities, again funded by the Trillium Foundation. They've expanded their therapy services, preschool autism services and infant hearing services to serve more kids in our neighbourhood, and a developmental pediatrician has joined the team.

Congratulations to the wonderful staff at KidsAbility and the West End Rec Centre, and to their long-standing supporters at the Guelph Rotary Club. This is indeed good news for special-needs kids in Guelph-Wellington.

HYDRO PROJECT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'd like to welcome members of the Kapuskasing Energy Regional Resource Association, or KERRA, to Queen's Park. Some of them are here in the members' gallery.

After travelling through the night, I greeted 100 concerned citizens at 8 o'clock this morning outside of Queen's Park. They have travelled more than 900 kilometres to urge the Ontario government to move forward with the Mattagami hydroelectric development project. Among the representatives are Colette Goulet, businesswoman and chairperson of KERRA; Martha-Lee

Riopel, councillor for the town of Kapuskasing; and Stan Louttit, the grand chief of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council, as well as other councillors and citizens.

The Mattagami River hydro project has been put on hold for too long. KERRA wants the government to understand that this project supports the government's commitment to renewable energy and also supports regional economic development. It does this by providing an opportunity for the Moose Cree First Nation, Tembec and SNC-Lavalin to partner in the redevelopment of four hydroelectric dams on the river. It promises to generate an additional 384 megawatts of renewable, clean energy for the province's grid.

KERRA has the power; now the government must turn on the switch. I say to the government: Work with KERRA; work with the partners in this project. It's obviously very important to the people of northeastern Ontario.

ENERGY CONSERVATION FORUM

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On Saturday, March 19, co-hosted by myself and the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, MPP for Ottawa-Vanier, a community energy conservation forum will take place in my riding at Ottawa city hall from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event is to highlight the importance of energy conservation through a variety of exhibits, speakers and information sessions.

Here the public will have the chance to browse more than 16 exhibits offering innovative and interesting methods for energy conservation in their home, office or small business. Additionally, the public has the opportunity to sit in on one of the many speaker sessions, offering more information on new energy-efficient products and programs. Those who attend can also bring their old light bulbs to trade in for new, energy-efficient versions that will, in turn, save money on future energy bills.

In addition to fresh fruit and beverages at the door, those who attend can enter a draw for a set of energy-efficient LED holiday lights or a personal energy audit for their home. All the prizes were graciously donated to the event by a variety of exhibitors, and I extend sincere thanks to them for their generosity and dedication to energy conservation.

Finally, I want to thank all of the staff members, volunteers, exhibitors and sponsors for their time and energy devoted to making this day a reality. I offer special appreciation to our sponsors: the city of Ottawa, Hydro Ottawa, Enbridge and the Ottawa Citizen. I'd like to take this time to give special thanks to Madeleine Meilleur and her staff, my Toronto staff and those in the constituency office, and I want to thank my former legislative intern, Rebecca Sciarra. Without her leadership, this day would not be possible. Well done, Rebecca.

I look forward to seeing you all there at the conservation forum.

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I rise to discuss the Stevenson Road interchange in my riding of Oshawa. As the Minister of Transportation is aware, the commitment was reinforced by him in this Legislature, and the previous government went through the process of studying, consulting and going through the environmental assessment for the new interchange.

This interchange will complement the recent General Motors announcement, as GM staff and providers will use this interchange, not to mention the current businesses and new businesses yet to come who will depend on the interchange to increase serviceability and potential customer traffic.

1340

Minister, the concern, the problem, is that the interchange timelines for completion have been substantially extended, virtually doubling them, when not so far away more advanced projects were listed as only taking half the time to complete. The acquisition process alone substantially delayed the process, further complicating the matter, which has all been cleared up. Minister, is it the financial contributing partners' timelines that have changed, is it the ministry that is delaying the process, or how can the partners in this very important project advance the construction of Oshawa's first fully serviced 401 interchange for the prosperity of all Ontarians?

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise today to celebrate two initiatives in the Flemingdon Park neighbourhood in my riding. Both of these programs demonstrate the importance of community access to public space, including our public schools.

Last Thursday, I visited an evening youth basketball league at Gateway Public School, led by Mr. Ali Baig. The league is in its second season of offering neighbourhood kids an excellent opportunity to improve their basketball skills, make friends and be physically active in safe, supervised space.

Yesterday I attended an International Women's Day celebration organized by the women-only swim group, led by Karen Boulton of Toronto Parks and Recreation. This program is ending its first year and has created a new opportunity for many Muslim women of the community to learn to swim or renew their skills.

Many members of this House have spoken about the importance of active living to our youth and to our broader society. That's a sentiment I share; it's one of the reasons these programs are so important. But I want to talk about the community-building aspect of these programs. It's not just the children who come out to the gym at Gateway every Thursday evening; it's their parents too. They meet other parents in the gym and become friends, and that builds a community. It's not just a physical activity that the women at the resource centre

benefit from; it's getting to know each other as neighbours.

Congratulations to Mr. Baig and the women of Flemingdon Park who worked with Karen Boulton and the many associated volunteers—women like Sahar Badawy, who are making their neighbourhood a safer and better place to live.

Through our community use of schools initiative, this government is doing its part to promote community-based recreation programs like these. In some neighbourhoods like Flemingdon Park, facilities that have not been available are now available free to the community. We're working to make that a reality across the province.

SEMAINE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): C'est avec plaisir que je viens adresser cette Assemblée pour une occasion très spéciale.

Hier midi, le lieutenant gouverneur de la province, l'honorable James Bartleman, accompagné de la ministre de la Culture et des Affaires francophones, l'honorable Madeleine Meilleur, a fait le lancement officiel de la Semaine de la francophonie en Ontario.

Cette année, les franco-Ontariens et franco-Ontariennes vont pouvoir célébrer davantage, puisque nous avons décidé de prolonger la période des festivités jusqu'au 20 mars prochain. Il ne faut pas oublier de célébrer l'adoption de la Loi 163 sur le bilinguisme de la ville d'Ottawa, une première en Ontario. Le 20 mars sera la Journée mondiale de la francophonie, et plus de 180 millions de francophones de cette planète seront en fête.

L'Ontario compte plus de 550 000 franco-Ontariens et franco-Ontariennes, et des activités ont été organisées d'un bout à l'autre de la province. Que ce soit à Windsor, à Hearst, à Timmins, à North Bay, à Pembroke, à Alexandria, à Cornwall, à Embrun, à Hawkesbury, à Orléans, à Cumberland, à Midland ou au grand Toronto, les francophones sont en fête.

Plus de neuf millions de personnes parlent le français au Canada, soit environ 28 % de la population canadienne. Donc, du 4 mars au 20 mars prochain, le Canada français sera en fête.

En tant qu'Ontariens et Ontariennes, soyons fiers d'être Canadiens, d'être Ontariens, et surtout d'être franco-Ontariens. Bonne fête, franco-Ontariens et franco-Ontariennes.

INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): On a aussi aujourd'hui parmi nous des résidents du nord-est de l'Ontario, de Hearst, de Smooth Rock Falls, de Kapuskasing, de Mattice, de Moonbeam et d'Opatatika. Ils sont ici pour une question aujourd'hui, ils sont ici pour une raison : c'est la décision par le ministre des Ressources naturelles de dire à Tembec et à Domtar que le bois qui

ira aux scieries présentement n'appartient pas à ces communautés mais à ces industries-là.

On est ici aujourd'hui pour dire simplement au ministre des Ressources naturelles, qui est aux alentours du coin du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines et du ministre de l'Énergie, que vous avez une responsabilité envers les communautés de les assurer que le bois qui est dans nos forêts appartient directement aux communautés et n'appartient pas directement à ces compagnies de scierie et de papeterie. On dit au gouvernement que c'est important que vous mettiez de côté des communautés et que vous vous assuriez que le bois qui est dans nos forêts est relié exactement aux communautés et non directement aux entreprises. Sinon, on va se trouver dans une situation où on aura des scieries dans une couple de communautés et on va avoir beaucoup de communautés qui vont perdre leur scierie.

On demandera directement au gouvernement aujourd'hui, plus tard dans la période des questions, d'être clair sur la question, de renverser la décision du ministre des Ressources naturelles et de dire que le bois n'appartient pas aux compagnies forestières, n'appartient pas à Tembec, n'appartient pas à Domtar, mais qu'il appartient à la communauté de l'Ontario, y incluses des communautés comme Opatatika, et qu'on s'assure que le bois reste avec ces communautés pour qu'eux autres puissent organiser leur propre relève.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): Yesterday, for the first time, associations for corn, soybean and wheat farmers, which happen to be Ontario's top three crops, held a joint annual convention in London. I'm pleased to say that our Minister of Agriculture was at the convention to show his support for our farmers.

This government believes in Ontario farmers and the products they sell. We support the production and use of alternative transportation fuels such as ethanol, which we get from the many corn producers in this province. That's why we are delivering on our ethanol commitment and have announced Ontario's intention to implement a renewable fuel strategy by 2007.

We know our grain farmers are facing some tough times. They are dealing with low commodity prices. Like Minister Peters has said, this government understands that farmers are facing a perfect storm. We are doing our part to ensure that farmers have the resources they need to continue with their way of life, but we need more people at the table. We need our federal counterparts to step up to the plate.

After last week's rally, Minister Peters contacted his federal counterpart to talk about helping grain farmers, who are facing the lowest prices in 25 years. Ontario farmers need more support. Along with Ontarians from across the province, they give \$23 billion more in taxes than they get back. Ontario farmers need the federal gov-

ernment to give them their fair share. This government is fighting for Ontario farmers at home and in Ottawa. We know farmers need aid, and we are working with them to get it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr11, An Act respecting the Kitchener-Waterloo Young Men's Christian Association.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual cost of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr11, An Act respecting the Kitchener-Waterloo Young Men's Christian Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

M. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke-Nord): M. le Président, je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du comité permanent de la justice et je propose son adoption.

I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 110, An Act to require the disclosure of information to police respecting persons being treated for gunshot wounds / Projet de loi 110, Loi exigeant la divulgation à la police de renseignements en ce qui concerne les personnes traitées pour blessure par balle.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to bring forward a unanimous consent motion for the House concerning Bill 92, which is the Municipal Amendment Act, 2004, dealing with the MOU between the province and the municipalities. Given that this bill was introduced on June 8 and has not been called in, almost a year, for even one hour of second reading debate, I move the following motion:

That, after question period today, the House immediately move to second reading debate on March 9, followed by immediate debate on March 29 and March—

The Speaker: You're asking for unanimous consent to bring forward a bill?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You're asking for unanimous consent to bring forward a bill, and there is a no.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Speaker: I rise to ask for unanimous consent to read the following resolutions into the record, as formally presented to the Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Please be seated. There's a request for unanimous consent, and I heard a no.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow Mr. Barrett to read a democratic annunciation of 11 recommendations by—

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to put silence to you now. I've said to sit down. You are asking for unanimous consent, and I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GENDER-BASED PRICE DISCRIMINATION PROHIBITION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 INTERDISANT LA DISCRIMINATION DES PRIX FONDÉE SUR LE SEXE

Mr. Berardinetti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 182, An Act to prohibit price discrimination on the basis of gender / Projet de loi 182, Loi interdisant la discrimination des prix fondée sur le sexe.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Berardinetti?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Very briefly, this bill prohibits price discrimination on the basis of gender. Individuals who face price discrimination on the basis of gender may file a complaint to which part IV of the Human Rights Code applies, or the person may commence an action in the Superior Court of Justice. Persons who practise price discrimination on the basis of gender may be prosecuted.

In short, this bill, if it becomes law, will prevent businesses such as dry cleaners, hairdressers, retailers, and others from charging different prices based on whether the person is a man or a woman.

I move that today and ask that this House support this.

DEFERRED VOTES

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Ramali, Khalil
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Craiton, Kim	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Patten, Richard	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Pupatello, Sandra	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like your assistance in asking for unanimous consent that Bill 92, the AMO memorandum of understanding act, be called for debate this afternoon.

The Speaker: In my assistance, I will then ask, do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce the wife of one

of our members, Michelle Berardinetti, who is the wife of the member for Scarborough Southwest.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): That is not a point of order, but of course she is welcome.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Is it one of those points of order that is not a point of order?

Mr. O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the House, I would like to stand and recognize members from my community of Durham riding who are here to support the Lanark Landowners' movement here today. I would like the members to welcome members from the agricultural community in Durham.

The Speaker: Again, it's not a point of order, but they are welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If we're going down this road, I would like to welcome the people from Kapuskasing, Hearst and Mattice who are here on quite a different issue. But, more importantly, if my wife could be here, she would say hi.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Anybody else?

The Speaker: Thank you very much. I was about to ask the member for St. Catharines to do his famous point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Mr. Speaker, I would like us to recognize anybody who has not been recognized in the gallery today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Hopefully, we won't get a repeat of the stonewalling exercise that he attempted to entertain us with yesterday. Minister, earlier this week you indicated that it would not be appropriate for you to meet with developers who had properties on the proposed greenbelt after, I think it was, August of last year. We subsequently heard that the chief political adviser in the Premier's office, David MacNaughton, had met with them after that date. We now hear that the Premier and his chief of staff, Mr. Guy, have also met with the developer in question. If it was sauce for the goose, it should be sauce for the gander. If you thought it was inappropriate to meet with developers during this period, do you think it's appropriate for the Premier of the province to meet with them? Give us an answer, please.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Once again, it gives me an opportunity to talk about the tre-

mindous accomplishment of this government in getting a million acres of land added to the protected space—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): This is the first question, and I'm hearing questions and answers from both sides, but not from the person to whom the question is being asked. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: It once again gives me an opportunity to speak about the tremendous accomplishment of this government in adding a million acres of land to the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment for permanent protection of the greenbelt around Toronto. This will not only be protected for agricultural purposes, but also for sensitive environmental purposes. That's what the people of Ontario are really concerned about. And they would like to know as well, where does John Tory stand with respect to the greenbelt? Is he in favour or is he not in favour of the greenbelt? We think it's a tremendous accomplishment, and we are proud of what we've done for generations to come.

Mr. Runciman: That was truly pathetic. You talk about smearing; you are smearing your own process with respect to the development of the greenbelt boundaries by refusing to answer what I think are very legitimate questions in this House. Day after day, you stand up and do that and refuse to answer questions.

Minister, last year you said you purposely didn't meet with developers who had an interest in the greenbelt. When faced with the truth, you fudged, fumbled and finally backtracked and said that you didn't meet with them from August onwards, that it was inappropriate. But we now know that Premier McGuinty, along with his top aides, met with at least one developer during the time when the maps were being drawn. The results: The developer received a \$15-million exemption. The scandal reaches right up the food chain. Of course, McGuinty is not here to explain himself; he's too busy at another fundraiser, ready to take more money from developers. Minister, your so-called process reeks of scandal. It's damaged goods. Will you support our call for a legislative inquiry to clear the air?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: The greenbelt process over the last year and three or four months has had more extensive consultation than any other process we've had in this House during the time that I've been here over the last 10 years. We set up a Greenbelt Task Force to work out the criteria on which the greenbelt should be preserved. They had about eight to 10 different meetings. They came up with recommendations dealing with principles that should be included in the greenbelt. We then set up a ministry process after the bill was introduced, whereby the ministry and I attended a number of meetings as well. We had about 10 public meetings again. Then there was the legislative process after the bill was given second reading. This bill has had more public consultation than any other piece of legislation in at least the last 10 years, and we are very proud of the result and what we've done for not only this generation but for generations to come.

Mr. Runciman: We're talking about the \$10,000 consultations; that's what we're talking about. Minister, the integrity of your greenbelt process has been sabotaged by your failure to be factual and by your boss and his shockingly poor judgment. First the parcel of land is included in the greenbelt, then the Premier meets with the developer, and now your revised map shows that same developer's land is magically excluded. That little trick was worth \$15 million. This is the same developer who paid \$10,000 to talk to the Premier only months before.

1410

Minister, you said yesterday, "I take full responsibility for the final plan and maps. That's why I'm minister." You personally asked me for my resignation on December 5, 2002, over a simple numbers disagreement with the Provincial Auditor. Given the clear appearance that your greenbelt boundaries were subject to influence by wealthy developers, and your statement that you now take full responsibility, do you think it's appropriate for you to remain in cabinet?

Applause.

The Speaker: Order. Another display like that by any individual hitting on the desk—I will regard this as a warning to everyone who has been hitting on their desks. Another display like that and I will be naming that member. I think it's disgraceful, that kind of behaviour. I would also ask the government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Where were we in this? The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me just say this: I am very proud of the process that was undertaken by this government with respect to the greenbelt. As I indicated before, once the Greenbelt Task Force report was received and the ministry started working on the mapping and the plan with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture, I made the personal decision that I was not going to meet with developers from that moment on, and I haven't.

There were many other meetings. There were 1,200 submissions made, as I indicated yesterday, by municipalities, by individuals, by stakeholders. I'm very proud of the process, and I know that the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Agriculture would be more than pleased to put their officials at the will of the members of the opposition if they want to have a full and complete briefing from those two ministries with respect to the science used to determine the greenbelt.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: On March 2, I asked you why you exempted the land of Mr. De Gasperis in Vaughan after receiving a \$10,000 donation to the Liberal Party, but the farmers in North Ajax, including the Kuleshnyk family—you ignored their concerns that were very much the same. You referred in your response on March 2 to the official plan for the city of Ajax. That quote came as a real surprise to a number of municipal leaders, including Vaughan mayor Michael

Di Biase, who wrote to you: "Given the facts and the notion that all Ontarians should be treated equally, we have no tolerance for double standards in this province. I request that you amend your greenbelt plan to reflect Vaughan's official plan and vision for future growth," in accordance with their official plans. That was written after your final greenbelt map came out. So despite your claims that it's based on the official plan, the Vaughan mayor says it's not.

Minister, why do you have this double standard? Why do developers get one way of treatment and farmers get the boot?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As I've indicated before, we received a number of different submissions. We received one from the town of Ajax, which wanted certain lands included in the greenbelt. We received letters from the mayor of Vaughan, who wanted us to take a look at certain areas that we'd already put in our draft plans. In both cases, what happened is exactly the same: The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture, together with my own ministry, looked at their submissions and, in some cases, were able to accommodate either the total request or some of the request. The mapping was changed in order to give will to the political will of the people involved, which are the duly elected councils of Ajax and Vaughan. Did they agree on everything that was suggested by these particular councils? Probably not. But they took another look at it and applied the best science that was available, both from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the LEAR system, as used in agriculture.

Mr. Hudak: The minister's answers keep changing. This notion that you considered municipalities equally is a bunch of garbage. You know full well you had similar requests from Brock, Pickering, Georgina, Durham, Grimsby, St. Catharines, Lincoln and York region. In fact, the town of Caledon sent you 69 separate errors in the greenbelt map. We called the town of Caledon, and not a single one changed.

Let's face it: You have been caught out. You've been caught out saying you didn't meet with developers, and you knew you did. You've been caught out giving a developer a greenbelt exemption for a \$15-million—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Government House leader, I'll give you a warning. I'd like to hear the question from the member from Erie-Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Minister, you've been caught out. You said you wouldn't meet developers, and you did. You've been caught out giving a \$15-million windfall exemption to one particular developer at least, and you've now been caught out with a double standard that some municipal resolutions are more powerful than others. Let's face it: The only reason for this exemption is tied to the \$10,000 donation to the Ontario Liberal Party. Admit the facts.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As I indicated yesterday, the developer I met with was Mr. De Gasperis, which was about four months before the actual greenbelt mapping and plans started in August of last year. He was only

concerned about one thing, and that was the agricultural preserve. He wanted to know whether or not we were going to meet our commitment, which was to preserve the agricultural preserve in the Pickering area for agricultural purposes, and that's what we did. We told him we were going to do that. That's what this is really all about.

I know the Tories are in favour of paving over that agricultural preserve, but we are not. We are living up to our commitments, and in order to ensure that it will not be built upon in the future, we included it in the greenbelt.

Mr. Hudak: The minister has the opposite of the Midas touch: You took a good idea, preserving green-space, and you blew it; you turned it into mud. Your incompetence on this issue is at an all-time high.

You cut the Beverly marsh in half. Your map zoned garbage dumps, cemeteries and junkyards as fruitland area. You have no plan for farmers. You have no plan for municipalities. One day you're meeting with developers; the next day you said you'd never met with developers. One day you say the minister shouldn't meet with developers, but it's OK for the Premier to meet with developers.

Let's face it: Despite the fact that we warned you not to take on this extraordinary power to make exemptions, you took that power, and now there are widespread accusations across the greenbelt and in the media that you abused that power and gave a \$15-million windfall exemption to one particular landowner and ignored the pleas of farmers. Minister, are you any longer fit to sit in the minister's chair?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I am very proud of what I, as minister, and the ministry did with respect to making the greenbelt a reality for this province. As I indicated before, we have gone through more consultation than we have on any other piece of legislation in this House over the last 10 years. Certain submissions were made. We took a look at them. With some we agreed and with some we didn't agree, but in all cases the best science and the best planning for this province was used in order to come up with the right decisions that were made. As the member well knows, in the end result, we ended up with 8,500 more acres in the greenbelt than we had in our draft plan, and we are proud of that for the people of Ontario.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take the minister up on his offer of a briefing, and I'd like to move that the standing committee on general government—

The Speaker: Order. I regard the point of order as asking for unanimous consent; is that it? I heard a no.

1420

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Acting Premier. I want to ask you about getting access to Premier McGuinty. At this moment,

Premier McGuinty is pressing his tux and slicking up his hair and unfolding his money belt, getting ready for the \$8,000-a-table Liberal fundraiser tonight. Who will attend? Wealthy developers, bankers, lobbyists and corporate executives who can afford the \$8,000 price tag. My question is, what about the people of Ontario who don't have \$8,000 to \$10,000 to purchase access: the nurses who are being laid off, the pulp and sawmill workers who are losing their jobs? What are those Ontarians who don't have the \$8,000 to \$10,000 supposed to do when they want a meeting with the Premier?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have this opportunity to remind all the members of this House that there has not been a harder-working Premier in the province of Ontario than Dalton McGuinty. This is a man who is here early in the morning and who works many long hours in this Legislative Assembly. This is a man who travels across the province during the intersession, sometimes through the week, to meet with Ontarians, to bring good news to their communities, to sit down and listen to them and their concerns. I say to the member opposite that this Premier has been more accessible and has met with more individuals and groups than any other Premier. This is the hardest-working man, and I'm proud to call him my leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. There is some distraction with those props. I would like to proceed with the supplementary question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'll state again that I have observed that a couple of books are being used as props. I want to proceed with question period and to hear the supplementary from the leader of the third party, and I'd request that you put away those books—props.

Mr. Hampton: Mr. Speaker, it's a book about politics in Ontario, but I will put it away.

I assume that the Acting Premier indicated by her answer that the Premier is worth the \$10,000 price of admission he is asking for. But I want to ask you about what you said before the election. Dalton McGuinty said, "The Harris-Eves government gave money too much influence and citizens too little." He also said, "We will put the public interest ahead of special interest." Two years later, you're not listening to ordinary Ontarians, you're not listening to the nurses that you're laying off, you're not listening to farmers who are losing their livelihoods or the paper mill and sawmill workers who are losing their jobs. No, you're not. You're too busy listening to the folks who can buy access tonight: developers, lobbyists, those who can afford the \$8,000 to \$10,000.

The Speaker: Order. There's no respect for this House by some members. The member for Niagara Centre has been displaying a book above my head here and I would—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I thought I had made myself pretty plain and clear in what I stated about books being

used as props. The member from Niagara Centre continues to do so, and I'm going to name you for this. You must have some respect for this place. I'm finding a deterioration in this place—it has really gone down—by certain members and I will not tolerate that kind of stuff.

I now name the member from Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: As I was saying, this reminds all of us of the time of Patti Starr, the time of the former Liberal government when developers could purchase access. My question is, since you don't want to acknowledge the time of Patti Starr, what are ordinary Ontarians to do today when it's very clear that if you want access to the Premier, you have to purchase a \$10,000-a-head private dinner or \$8,000-a-head access to a Liberal Party fundraiser? What about the ordinary Ontarians who don't have \$8,000 to \$10,000?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: That is absolutely ridiculous. There is not a government in the history of this province that has been more accessible to the people of the province, with the laws we're passing. I am proud to say that with every piece of legislation that has been brought to this assembly, there has been public consultation, and members of the public have been able to access that process free of charge. To suggest anything otherwise is simply not accurate.

Mr. Hampton: I want to talk about the people who have money. They don't go to public consultations; they purchase a \$10,000 private dinner or they purchase an \$8,000 ticket to a Liberal fundraiser. When they want to consult, they ask for secret backroom meetings with advisers. When they want to talk to a cabinet minister, they go privately to a Stanley Cup playoff game with the cabinet minister. I want to ask about those. You see, ordinary Ontarians don't have the money to purchase that kind of access. So I ask the Acting Premier again: What about the people who don't have a private box to go and watch the Stanley Cup playoffs with a cabinet minister? What about the people who can't purchase those \$10,000 exclusive, secret dinners with the Premier? When do they get listened to? When do they get access?

1430

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I guess I'd like the members of the assembly to know, too, that the honourable member and his party are having a fundraiser. And guess what? You have to pay to go. And guess what you have to pay? You have to pay \$1,500. So I'm just having difficulty. If the suggestion is that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: It's pretty clear that what we've got now under the McGuinty government is two Ontarios. You've got access Ontario if you have money, and then you've got the ordinary folks who are increasingly—

The Speaker: Your question is to?

Mr. Hampton: It's to the Acting Premier, Speaker. Then we've got the ordinary folks: the nurses who are losing their jobs, the paper mill and sawmill workers who

are losing their jobs and the farmers who are losing their livelihood. What I want to ask is this: Before the election, you said you believed in full disclosure, real-time disclosure. We've been asking, for a couple weeks now, for the names of the 14 insiders who paid \$10,000 a person to have a private dinner with the Premier and the Minister of Finance. Would you tell us finally, please, who were the 14 swanky individuals who could afford \$10,000 a person to have a private dinner with the Premier and the Minister of Finance while you were talking about the greenbelt boundaries?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: The minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for his question. Of course, the names of everybody who donated to the Ontario Liberal Party, to the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party will be disclosed. They can be disclosed in either one of two ways: They can be disclosed under the old laws, where a disclosure takes place by parties once a year, or they can be disclosed under the new system, where disclosure takes place not every 365 days but every five days. If we could get the New Democratic Party to just agree and provide unanimous consent to pass this bill, we could have that information in the hands of Ontarians right now.

So, Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent for the order of second and third readings of Bill 176, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We have a motion asking for unanimous consent. Do we have consent? No.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let's all settle down. We've got a few more—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could we all settle down now, please. I'm sure the leader of the third party would like to ask his supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: It's not members over here who have been interrupting me.

The Attorney General mentions his real-time disclosure. Well, it's not real-time disclosure; it's real watered down. This is what the Windsor Star has to say about it: "The toothless pap introduced Monday by Attorney General Michael Bryant is nothing more than a PR exercise and a farcical half-measure." The Globe and Mail's Murray Campbell says: "Imagine myriad numbered companies making \$5,600 gifts and you get an idea of the magnitude of donations that could be hidden." Democracy Watch's Duff Conacher says: "Given their record of broken promises, no one should hold their breath waiting for the Ontario Liberals to take effective action to reduce the influence of money in Ontario politics."

Simple question, Attorney General: Who were the 14 developers who paid \$10,000 a person to have private access to the Premier and the Minister of Finance while the greenbelt boundaries were being established?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I say to the member, as he knows, it works like this: We provide disclosure to Elections Ontario. Right now, under the current law, Elections Ontario has no authority to release that information; not for another year. But if we can get this bill passed, Elections Ontario can have this out in five days—not 365 days, but five days. I say to you that if you ask the average Ontarian whether or not transparency finds itself out of five days or 365 days, they will say, "Let's go with the McGuinty government's real-time disclosure." So I say to the leader of the NDP, it's time for real-time disclosure right now.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the McGuinty government's real-time disclosure: All those 10 individuals have to do is write cheques for \$1,500 to the Minister of Finance's riding association or any other Liberal riding association, and there is no real-time disclosure. That's the McGuinty government's version of real-time disclosure.

But the issue is this: At the very time that the greenbelt boundaries were being established, 14 very wealthy individuals, mostly developers, paid \$10,000 a person to have private access to the Premier at the very time that you were deciding the greenbelt boundaries. Can you tell us, please, Acting Premier—you're the one who guaranteed real-time disclosure, and this is real time; this is question period—who are the 14 individuals who paid all that money just to have the private ear of the Premier about where the greenbelt boundaries should be established?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I'm very concerned with something the member said in his question. He referred to \$1,500 donations to riding associations. As the member knows, it would be contrary to the laws of Ontario if anybody contributed \$1,500 to the riding association. I should hope that there are no \$1,500 contributions to the New Democratic Party's riding associations going on right now. I think what the NDP is getting at is that they want to pretend to seek real-time disclosure but they're not willing to get this bill passed right now so that we can get real-time disclosure in real time.

So let me see if I can do this just one more time, Speaker. I'm going to seek unanimous consent that we have the order of second and third readings of Bill 176, that the question be immediately put without further debate or amendment, and that we can get this real-time disclosure in real time.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm trying to move to a new question.

New question, the leader of the official opposition.

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): As someone who resigned from cabinet on the principle

of ministerial responsibility, I've never felt comfortable calling for resignations. But less than three years ago, the now Minister of Municipal Affairs felt a minor dispute over numbers justified a ministerial resignation. Now you're a minister, and the chickens have come home to roost. Was this ethical standard that you demanded of others less than three short years ago as phony as your "I did not meet with developers" pledge on TVO, or will you do the right thing, admit your greenbelt boundary process was tainted by developer money and abide by ministerial standards that you professed to believe in in 2002?

1440

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I can only, once again, repeat that I am very proud of the process that we took with respect to determining the greenbelt boundaries. I am proud of the process that we took, of the public consultation that took place, of the number of people who made submissions both to the Greenbelt Task Force and later on to the ministry-led consultation that came before the legislative committee, which had four days of hearings. I'm very, very proud of that process.

Not everybody who came before the committee and before the various task forces and before the consultation process got what they wanted. But we listened to people. We used the best science that was available from the Ministry of Natural Resources, dealing basically with the watershed, the basis that the Minister of Natural Resources uses to determine what should be protected from a sensitive environmental viewpoint.

We are proud of that process, and we are very, very proud of the greenbelt that has been established for many, many generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): The minister referenced science that still is missing; it's not public after six days of repeated and heated questioning here in the Legislature. You have not brought forward a single beaker of science to justify any exemption, particularly the \$15-million windfall for the developer.

And sadly, farmers who could not get any appeal, farmers who were not shown any science, farmers who weren't even notified that their land was in the greenbelt, have given up. Six of those farmers would like to pass on to you \$10,000 cheques so at least they'll have an opportunity to make their point to the minister and to Premier McGuinty. It shouldn't be that way, but that's what farmers have concluded.

Minister, you've blown it: You've taken a good idea—to preserve green space—and you've blown it big time. There are growing and widespread suspicions that developers can buy their way out of the greenbelt. Minister, you have no choice. Will you do the right thing? Will you step aside? Will you resign until this matter is cleared up?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I refer the question with respect to the science that was used to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): For the last month, we have handed the science over to the opposition party.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member from Nepean-Carleton.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Yes, we did. You have the Natural Heritage Reference Manual that was developed over 15 years with all of the stakeholders. This was developed under your government in 1999, and that is the science we developed. The same science we used for the Oak Ridges moraine we also used when it came to the greenbelt.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Last warning, member from Nepean-Carleton: Stop interrupting the minister answering.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: This references all the guidelines of how the greenbelt was determined, how the boundary refinement techniques were done. We again will offer you a full hearing—

The Speaker: Order. I'm going to ask the leader of the third party, is that the book that I made reference to in regard to a prop?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Yes, Speaker, I'm reading a book. Do you object to my reading a book?

The Speaker: I will say this again: I don't object to a member reading, but to holding up the book after I ruled that it is a prop in itself. I would rather you not display it in any other way. You know that. You are one of the members I respect in this House, and I know that you are quite aware of the rules of this House. The respectability of this House has really deteriorated lately. I hope that you would somehow respect the order that I have given. If you're going to read, I'd rather you lower it and not display it.

Mr. Runciman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think all of us in this House want to respect the rulings of the Chair, but we all want to be treated in an equal manner. The minister was holding up a document. If we do it on this side of the House, you rule us out of order, so we ask for equal treatment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The member from Nepean-Carleton, I'm going to name you. I warned you on two occasions about rapping on the desk, and I name you now.

Mr. Baird was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker: I just want to comment on the leader of the official opposition. I try to be fair, and I hope it is in regard to respect for this House. I was focusing on one aspect of the thing. The member who was reading from that was responding to his question. I did not rule that in any way as a prop.

New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Acting Premier. In the gallery with us today,

and outside the Legislature today, there are some 80 people from the region of Kapuskasing, Hearst and Opasatika. They're upset with your government's decision to allow Tembec to shut down the sawmill in Opasatika—it's their business decision. We don't take objection to that—it's their decision—but we're upset with your Minister of Natural Resources' decision to say that the wood belongs to Tembec and that they can take it off to a supermill down the road if they want. We're here today to ask you one simple question: Will you overturn the decision of your minister and have the minister do what's right and ensure that the wood that's in the forest stays tied to that community, so that this community can organize itself and find somebody else who is prepared to run a sawmill in Opasatika, and other communities so we can preserve the jobs in those communities?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'll refer that to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): To answer the question of the honourable member from the other side, as the member knows, the way the licence was structured under the NDP government, the licence was granted to Spruce Falls, which had two plants at the time. Tembec purchased that company and has since decided to run one operation and not two. There was no requirement to make any changes at all. They are the original licence holder, they retain that licence today, and they've decided to move that wood into one operation and not two. There are no changes referred to me.

Mr. Bisson: Minister, you know as well as I do that there's a minister's directive on the licence, and you have the authority as Minister of Natural Resources to do the right thing. Your decision to allow Tembec to cut and run with the timber basically puts Opasatika high and dry. It's the beginning of the end for a number of small communities across northeastern and northwestern Ontario. We're saying: Do the right thing. The former Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Ouellette, said no to Tembec when it came to Kirkland Lake, our government said no when it came to other communities, and we're saying to you, you're in the big chair now. You drive the limo. Say no to the big companies. Stand with the communities so that they can organize their lives and assure themselves of a future in northern Ontario when it comes to the lumber industry.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: What I'm going to say to the member is the harsh reality of what's happening in the forest industry: that the very small mills are not going to survive. What's going to happen is that the companies are going to walk away from all of them unless they have the opportunity to consolidate their operations and make investments in technology so that we can have a sustainable forest industry, in the meantime supplementing that with value-added operations in our communities so that we can grow our jobs in forestry. But we have to have competitive plants to compete with the world market, because we have a lot of competitors right across this country, as we do across this world.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and it's re the child advocate. Minister, yesterday you made an announcement of your intention to appoint a new independent office of youth and child advocacy. It is my understanding we already have an office of youth and child advocacy for children in the justice system, children we're responsible for in other ways, around disabilities or some other needs. I was wondering what those changes are that you are planning. Can you give us some sort of time frame when you're planning to make those changes?
1450

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for her question and for her commitment to children in this province and in her riding. We are delivering on a key commitment to make the child advocate truly independent. My ministry is currently working on legislation that I hope to introduce this spring. If passed, our proposed changes would mean the advocate would be chosen by an all-party committee, would report directly to the Legislature, would submit an annual report to the Legislature and would have the flexibility to issue special reports at their discretion. We believe that the advocate must be independent for that person to effectively carry out their responsibilities, without political influence.

Mrs. Cansfield: Minister, it sounds, actually, like you're going to protect the child advocate as much as you're going to protect the children. That's terrific to hear because, as I recall, the treatment by the previous government around child advocacy wasn't as great as it could have been. We need to know how the changes differ, when they will occur and how you're going to deal with the relationship between the job of advocacy and this House.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I thank the honourable member for her supplementary. The reason we needed to change is that in the past, political influence stopped the advocate from truly advocating for children and youth in this province. Judy Finlay, who has worked tirelessly, not only advocating for children and youth but also helping them along with advocating for themselves, was quoted in the *Globe and Mail* as saying, "I feel my job is at risk ... the viability of the office as an independent voice for children in this province is at risk." She said this during the former government's stay in office.

We took this very seriously as opposition, and my colleague the now Minister of the Environment, being the critic at the time, fought very hard, along with Judy Finlay. This got on our platform and I'm very pleased that we announced yesterday that we're going to keep this commitment.

The advocate must truly be free of political influence, must be independent and must have the same powers as the Auditor General and the Ombudsman. With this new independence, the advocate would be better able to

advocate for our youngest citizens. We hope that with respect to any future government, this important role will never be muzzled again. Our children deserve no less.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Last week we heard from thousands of farmers looking for help, answers and results. Today we're hearing from another large group of farmers looking for the same things. Yesterday you said you considered today's group a fringe group, but when my colleagues and I went out this morning visiting with the farmers, I saw many of the same faces I saw last week. Minister, these are real people, rural people, looking for answers to their concerns. Farmers couldn't get an answer last week, and today farmers couldn't even get you to listen. You left town last week without an answer to our questions, and you weren't out on the lawn today. So again, I ask you: Where is your support? When is the support coming for our farmers in our rural communities?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): That support has been there for our farmers since this government took office on October 23, 2003. Unlike the previous government, who slashed and burned over \$125 million out of the base operating budget of this ministry, we are not doing that. We are working with agricultural organizations. We listen to what the farmers have to say. Just yesterday, we heard the concerns raised over permits to take water. The Minister of the Environment announced that exemptions will be put in place for farmers with the permits to take water.

Perhaps the member can stand up in his supplementary and tell us very clearly where he stands and where his party stands in the recognition of the Lanark Landowners, because my understanding is that his leader, John Tory, has told Ron Bonnett that they don't support the Lanark Landowners' Association. So perhaps the question can be answered for all—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Hardeman: This isn't about which organization I support; this is about supporting our agricultural community. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food just took a 20% cut to the overall budget. You cut support programs for the farmers by \$50 million. Minister, it's quite obvious that your government has no plan for our farmers. They would much rather have a fancy place to stay at the casino than have a stable and reliable food source from our Ontario farmers.

Minister, where are the results? Where is the promised money for our tobacco farmers? How are farmers going to get their seed in the ground? Do farmers have to pay \$10,000 to talk to the Premier? They can't afford it. They need your help, Minister, in getting the support they need. I ask you again, is this just another Liberal broken promise: No money for the tobacco farmers, no money for support programs, pay \$10,000 and the Premier will

listen? Or are you going to talk to the Premier for them, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Peters: Unlike previous Premiers, our Premier does talk to farmers. Our Premier met with those farmers on February 22. As well, we have been there supporting farmers. We've moved forward on \$94 million in transition through the market revenue program. We've provided over \$138 million in support to the beef industry. Because we believe in family farms and we want farms to continue, we've exempted land transfer tax on family-to-family farm sales—a very important thing. We've moved forward, as well—unlike your government, which was prepared to tax maple syrup operations as industrial operations. We recognize that a maple syrup operation is an agricultural operation. We're going to continue to work with the agricultural organizations because this is the second-largest industry and this is an industry we want to survive and thrive into the future.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In the gallery today are Paulette and Eric Buenaflor. They're here to advocate on behalf of their son Mark, who has autism. Mark was diagnosed with autism October 9, 2003, and later that day he was put on a waiting list for IBI therapy at Toronto Preschool Autism Service. He was finally assessed by TPAS on December 2, 2004, and he was deemed eligible for IBI on December 17. He needs 25 hours of IBI per week, but Mark still hasn't started his treatment. He turns six on April 27. If he doesn't start treatment soon, he's going to be another victim of your government's discrimination against autistic children, age six. Minister, what are you going to do to ensure that Mark starts his IBI before he turns six?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for her question and for her passion and caring on this issue, and I welcome the parents to the gallery. We inherited this file. We are doing our very best to hire therapists quickly. We hired over 102 new therapists as of February 4. We have decreased the waiting lists. We do understand that even one child on a waiting list is one child too many. We are working as hard as we can. We have had an influx of \$10 million for the under-six program itself and \$30 million for the school-based program.

Ms. Martel: Minister, I asked specifically what you are doing to ensure that Mark gets IBI before he turns six, which is on April 27.

Interjection.

Ms. Martel: You see, these parents wouldn't have to be here today, I say to the Minister of Economic Development, if your government had done what you promised to do during the election. Let me remind you what your Premier had to say during the election: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory.

The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six.”

The McGuinty Liberals are discriminating against autistic children over the age of six just as aggressively as the Conservatives did before them. Mark has been on a waiting list for 17 months today. He is qualified for IBI, and if he doesn't get it before April 27, he'll never get it, not one day at all. When are you and your government going to stop discriminating against children like Mark and every other child over the age of six who needs medically necessary IBI?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I thank the member for her question. I'm tremendously proud of our autism strategy. We have doubled our spending from \$40 million to \$80 million a year. We have put an extra \$10 million for the under-six program and are working as fast as we can to hire new therapists. We have put a school-based program into place and are offering transition coordinators and resource people to help children with autism right through the spectrum of getting diagnosed to finishing high school.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member for Nickel Belt, please come to order.

1500

IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Finance on the immigrant investor program. As you know, the immigrant investor program for Canada is divided into two streams. One stream is for Quebec, and the other stream is for the rest of Canada. I want to tell you quickly how these streams have been skewed over the years. Quebec, in this respect, in 2002 was getting \$350 million; the rest of Canada was \$70 million. In 2003 the federal program was getting \$32 million and the Quebec program was getting \$470 million. When we are looking at 1999 to 2004, and we're looking at all these figures, what do we see? We see that Ontario was getting about \$100 million, whereas Quebec was getting \$1.9 billion. I know—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is that the question? Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): My friend from Parkdale points out yet another of the anomalies between what the people of Ontario contribute to the federation and what we get back. There has been a great deal of discussion about the anomalies in the area of immigration. We are certainly not complaining about the value that the province of Quebec gets from the federal government in terms of support for immigration. Our argument is, and will continue to be, that the vast majority of immigrants who come to Canada—whether they are in the investor class or, like most of the immigrants, just hard-working people who want to start a new life—come to this great province. What we've been saying for quite some time is that it's high time we had an immigration agreement with the federal government

that recognizes the fact that most immigrants are coming to Ontario, and that Ontario needs the preponderance of support.

Interjections.

Mr. Ruprecht: I don't know why the opposition is shouting us down when this is a deal that we're going to sign. The very sad fact is that immigrants deposit \$400,000 in Quebec, and out of this \$400,000, many of these immigrants then suddenly decide to get a condo there and move to Ontario. Just think about that. Just to get the agreement straight, if immigrants would deposit this kind of money in Ontario in programs designed specifically to further our economy, think what benefit that would mean to us. Let me simply ask the minister this question—I know we're lucky to have him as Minister of Finance, by the way. Minister, I want to ask you right now: What are you going to do in terms of this deal? Are you going to push this with the federal government, or are we going to continue with this kind of skewed situation?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I should point out that my colleague from Parkdale is one of the members of this house, among all three parties, who has dedicated his life to helping immigrants settle in this province and this city. He's one of the great champions. I hope to replicate that kind of championship style.

We need to have a new agreement. We're already making some advances on this so-called immigrant investor program, so that we're attracting more of that group of immigrants to the province. But the real work has to be done with the national government, and the real work has to be in the form of an agreement with the federal Minister of Immigration, Mr. Volpe, a good friend and a good colleague. It has to be with the government, so that sooner rather than later we have an immigration agreement with the federal government that reflects immigrants' contribution to this great province and the country.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: As you now know, there are many groups standing shoulder to shoulder, standing united out there today, as well as last Wednesday. Minister, where were you today? Your absence speaks volumes to your tactic to divide and conquer. This is unprofessional. This is disrespectful, coming from a minister of the crown. Answer this question, please—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Minister of Health, come to order.

Mr. Barrett: My question, Minister: Why is it that you and your government insist on playing favourites and pitting one farm group against another farm group, one rural organization against another organization, one crop against another crop? Why would you insist on divide and conquer?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):

Talk about pitting farm group against farm group. I'd like to know what Her Majesty's loyal opposition is doing when you read in Hansard yesterday of the disrespectful steps that this group took in posting a picture of a dead deer, of the Minister of the Environment. The member from Nepean—Carleton made it very clear yesterday: "On behalf of the official opposition, I want to put on the record that we dissociate ourselves from those things." So who's trying to divide and conquer right now?

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture does not support what's happening today. We have not heard from other groups of their support for today. John Tory told the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture that they want to work with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We're going to continue to work with general farm organizations. My question is, who is trying to divide and conquer? Quite honestly, I believe it's the Conservative Party. The Conservative Party is trying to divide farmers in this province by standing up and endorsing rallies like those that are taking place today. That's very shameful.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions is over.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to allow my friend Michael Prue to go and sign the deal with the federal government to get us into an immigration agreement.

The Speaker: Do we have that unanimous consent? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby—Ajax): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget" broke "the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by 'one penny' on 'working families'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes; and

"Whereas any and all increases in OHIP premiums must go into OHIP, not into a consolidated general revenue fund;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I've signed my name to that.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have some petitions from a group of five high school student bodies from Ottawa in support of a smoke-free Ontario. Their petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke is the number one preventable killer in Ontario today, and there is overwhelming evidence that retail displays of tobacco products" called power walls "in plain view of children and adults increase the use of tobacco; we have collected 324 postcards signed by persons from our school and community supporting a smoke-free Ontario in 2005 and banning the use of power walls to promote tobacco use.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to make all public places and workplaces smoke-free and to ban the use of power walls. The city of Ottawa has been smoke-free since August 2001. All of Ontario deserves clean air."

I sign my name to this petition.

1510

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe—Grey): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of two-hatters, firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters in their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas two-hatter firefighters are now being forced against their will by the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to resign their positions as volunteer firefighters, ambulance paramedics or police auxiliary members, under the threat of being charged by their union and losing their full-time jobs; and

"Whereas Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, British Columbia and jurisdictions throughout the United States have legislation to protect the right of firefighters to serve as volunteers, while Ontario's inexplicable lack of adequate labour legislation leaves them open to the threat of intimidation and dismissal for providing a noble community service;

"Whereas Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, which has been introduced in the Legislature, will uphold the right of firefighters to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for Bill 52 and pass it into law, or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank fire chief Dave Carruthers from the Clearview fire department for circulating this petition and sending it to me, and I certainly agree with it.

LOI CONTRE LE TABAGISME

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): J'ai une pétition qui provient des étudiants de l'école secondaire Gisèle-Lalonde d'Orléans à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le tabagisme et l'exposition à la fumée secondaire représente aujourd'hui la principale cause évitable de décès en Ontario, et que les preuves accablantes révèlent que la publicité au point de vente de produits de tabac, surtout l'étalage mural à grande visibilité bien en vue des enfants et des adultes, favorise la consommation de tabac;

« Nous avons recueilli à notre école et au sein de notre collectivité 624 cartes postales demandant que l'Ontario soit déclaré sans fumée en 2005, et que l'utilisation des étalages muraux à grande visibilité soit interdite pour la promotion du tabac.

« Les soussignés demandent que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario appuie la loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée afin d'interdire l'usage du tabac dans les endroits publics et les lieux de travail, et de bannir l'utilisation des étalages muraux à grande visibilité.

« La ville d'Ottawa s'est déclarée ville sans fumée depuis le mois d'août 2001. Tous les résidents de l'Ontario ont droit à l'air pur. »

J'y ajoute ma signature avec plaisir.

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton–Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, this is the last day for the pages, is it not? I just wonder.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Yes. Could I ask you to do that at the end of petitions.

Mr. Colle: We all want to thank them for their great work. That's all I'm saying.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This petition is entitled "Protect our Farmers." We garnered just today about 500 signatures outside.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to the lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis, and will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deal with the serious issue of farm income, as brought forward by the Rural Revolution's resolutions to respect property and prosperity, as follows:

"Federal and provincial governments have created a bureaucratic environment that legalizes the theft of

millions of dollars for rural business and farm income. All money found to be removed from rural landowners, farmers and businesses shall be returned."

I affix my signature.

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): I present this petition on behalf of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Child Development Centre, Kingston serves a population of 700 children with disabilities;

"Whereas the McGuinty government stated in its 2004 budget, 'Children's treatment centres help parents obtain and coordinate a range of services for children with disabilities;'

"Whereas the \$24-million capital investment over four years outlined in this budget represents capital expenses and not the operating budget, and along with a small 3% increase, these monies did not assist with the shortfall at the Child Development Centre in Kingston;

"Whereas this shortfall has resulted in cuts to staff positions, particularly psychology, and cutbacks in services and programming at the Child Development Centre, Kingston. This is a much-needed and much-used facility;

"Whereas the Child Development Centre is the only agency whose mandate includes services for children with physical disabilities. Problems of accessibility and lack of specialized knowledge about the various conditions mean that children with physical disabilities cannot access services elsewhere in the community;

"Whereas psychology is a necessary service for children with physical disabilities and their families. Children with physical disabilities are more likely than the general population to have learning difficulties and their special needs require adapted assessments by psychologists with specialized expertise;

"Whereas children with physical disabilities require support at all stages of their development as they increase their understanding of their disability to achieve optimal potential as active, contributing members of society;

"Whereas services for this group are not available elsewhere in the community. These services must be maintained;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario government to reconsider its funding formula for this unique setting. We propose that the McGuinty government immediately approve a proposal to provide sufficient annualized funding for the children's treatment centre in Kingston, using some of the federal \$9-billion contribution to support this vulnerable group of young people who represent our future."

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition here that relates to the protection of individual rights. It

was presented today to the Legislature by members of the Rural Revolution and refers to a number of resolutions presented by them. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis due to lost property rights and crushing regulatory burden on rural Ontarians and will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address the issue of respecting property rights as in the Rural Revolution's resolutions to respect property and prosperity as follows:

"Resolution 1: The right to own, use, enjoy, and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy.

"Resolution 2: Private property shall not be rezoned, redesignated or reclassified in any manner that limits the natural and private use of property without fair and timely compensation.

"Resolution 7: The proposed greenbelt legislation shall be amended to respect property rights as mentioned in resolutions 1 and 2.

"Resolution 11: All entry on to private lands by government officials shall only be conducted with the informed consent of the property owner or under the authority of a search warrant."

I affix my signature.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario, and especially to the minister of infrastructure services. It reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel in an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West," just west of Old Weston Road, "making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

"Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge; and

"Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes.);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Ave. West so that trains will pass under" the St. Clair Avenue West tunnel, "thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its

high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this 100%, I sign it.

1520

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's being presented on behalf of a lot of people around the front lawn of Queen's Park today.

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis and they will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9," which of course is today;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deal with the serious issue of farm income, as brought forward by the Rural Revolution resolutions to respect property and prosperity as follows:

"Federal and provincial governments have created a bureaucratic environment that legalizes the theft of millions of dollars for rural businesses and farm income. All money found to be removed from rural landowners, farmers and businesses shall be returned."

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition signed by a number of people from the area of Huronia. It reads as follows:

"Save Huronia Regional Centre, Home to People with Developmental Disabilities!

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—that's us.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre"—can you imagine that?—"home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental

disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence'...."

I sign that petition.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I present this petition to the Legislative of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial government delisted OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services for seniors, the disabled and people with low income; and

"Whereas physiotherapy is an essential service that allows people to maintain independent living, reducing health care costs in the long term;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, demand that the provincial government reinstate OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services for seniors, the disabled and people with low income."

I'm happy to sign this.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I know folks want to thank the pages. This is their last day in the House. Many of the members who aren't here would have liked to hear this also, but they will be reading Hansard, I'm sure.

Thank you very much for the tremendous service you've done for us here. We wish you all the best.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent for the House to sit for another two weeks and allow these pages to stay with us.

The Speaker: I'll see if we have unanimous consent. I'm hearing a no. I think it came from the pages, too.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent to allow the pages to stay, provided Mr. Bisson stays here for the next two weeks to chaperone.

Interjections: Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: No. It has been a long session.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FILM CLASSIFICATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LE CLASSEMENT DES FILMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 16, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 158, An Act to replace the Theatres Act and to amend other Acts in respect of film / Projet de loi 158, Loi remplaçant la Loi sur les cinémas et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les films.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member for Timmins-James Bay had some more time on this.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Before I was so rudely interrupted by the adjournment of the House, I was having an opportunity with this particular bill, if you remember, to talk about the whole issue of censorship and about how I understand that, as a society, there are certain issues we want to make sure we have some controls for when it comes to distributing films of different types in movie theatres and on video shelves across the province. What I was saying was that I agree, to an extent, that we have to have a rating system so that parents or individuals themselves are able to make sound decisions about what they're going to view and what they're going to rent when it comes to movies or books or whatever—movies, I should say, in this particular case.

However, I have some reservations around the issue of censorship, because I've never been a big fan of censorship. I was a bit aghast today to see that we have censorship going on here in the House around what books we can read, but that's a debate for another day. I will just say that in a democratic society such as ours and others, one of the basic things we agree with is that individuals have the right to choose, and that's the key word here, what they want to read or view.

I'm not into some of the books and movies that some people purport to enjoy. That's not my thing. I like to watch good documentaries. I love *The West Wing*; I just bought the third season. I bought *24*; I'm somewhat disappointed after the first season, but that's another story. The point is that I believe it's up to individuals to choose what they want to be entertained by when it comes to watching movies.

Obviously, there are certain things where we should, I guess to a certain extent, go beyond rating, but even then it's pretty tough, because there are certain types of movies we would not want going in to general distribution in Ontario. I'm sure that's where the government is going when they talk about some forms of censorship in this bill. But I want to put it on the record that if at one point a court has to make a decision as to what the legislators had in mind when they were passing this bill, I want it to be clear that, as New Democrats, we are not in favour of censorship in almost all forms. We believe censorship is a bad approach that governments sometimes take in a democratic society like ours. Censorship begins at home. You decide yourself as a parent what you think your children should be viewing or reading or watching. You decide as an individual what you want to look at.

One of the things I think we have a responsibility for, however, as a society, is to properly label or rate those movies or whatever forms of entertainment, so that we can make a more informed choice as a society and as individuals within that society. Insofar as the government was going that way, I guess I wouldn't have a lot of difficulty with the bill, but as I read the bill—I'm looking forward to its time in committee because I think we need to clarify this point—there are sections of this bill that speak to censorship, which I want to believe are very

limited, because I believe there are very limited and few occasions where censorship should be allowed.

For example, in this House, I believe that people should be allowed to read books and should be allowed to read the books they believe in, as we do outside in this society, and I'm sure you share that view with me. I just say to the government across the way, certainly that's the kind of tradition that we're used to in democracy, that's what democracy stands for, and we need to be very careful as we go down that path.

Revamping the rating system makes some sense. The work the Ontario Film Review Board does is important, but censorship? That's a place I'm just not prepared to go.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to speak a little bit about Bill 158. The member opposite makes some good points and suggestions. The concerns he raises are legitimate in terms of what censorship could or could not do. I'd like him to know that, as a former educator—I'm actually still on leave—and as a principal, we set up several programs to educate parents about what was going on in some of the records, the albums, the CDs, the movies, the videos. We tried to set that up as an educational tool, to ensure that parents were actually getting the scoop, because as we know and as you alluded to, the parents were not aware of some of the things that were going on in some of these things.

In my constituency role, I've had several parents bring me CDs and different types of materials that were available to them. They could go and rent these things and get access to them very easily. One of the things I brought to the minister's attention was the concern some of the parents have with regard to the accessibility of these particular materials. Even though they were voluntarily rated, they were still being sold over the counter by very young attendants, who may or may not have been told by their managers, "It doesn't matter how old the kid is; if they come to buy that item, you sell it to them."

1530

That's not quite what we're talking about here in terms of the bill, but these are the types of issues that I know he's talking about when he asks, "Do we want to go down the road of censorship?" I think we want to make sure that people are educated about what exactly is happening, what these types of materials are. Do I want to sit back and say, "These are the only things you can do," or "Those things you can't do"? I don't want to be the one to do that.

I make it very clear that I think we should do more educating. It's an opportunity for us to engage in that conversation about how parents should be made aware of the types of things they're listening to, they're watching and they're exposed to. That's for the sake of our children. As adults, we know what doesn't work, and that is trying to get into the bedrooms of the nation.

I'd like to thank the member for his concerns.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm very pleased to make some comments on the speech by my colleague the member for Timmins-James Bay. I have to

say that I agree with a great deal of what he had to say in his comments, not only this afternoon but when he first spoke in debate on Bill 158. I had the fortune of being here as well when our critic gave his leadoff speech on this particular bill.

It's interesting to reflect on the timing of this bill coming forward. The government is up against the wall in regard to having to come forward with some kind of legislation, because the existing legislation was struck down by the courts. In fact, my understanding is, the clock started to tick on April 30, 2004. So we can see that the government's really in a big hurry to get this happening and to get it passed, and I can understand why: because they waited until the last minute.

Not only did they wait until the last minute, but it looks like they scrambled to put together a bill that, from what I understand from reading it, getting the analysis of our staff and understanding what our critic is saying on this particular bill, recreates the very bill that got struck down by the courts. So it behooves the question: What the heck are they doing over there? Holy smokes, they're in a rush to get this through. But the very bottom line is that what they've put forward in Bill 158 still does not address the sections of the previous act that were unconstitutional.

It's extremely frustrating for those of us on this side of the House who would rather support housekeeping-type bills like this and get them through the Legislature. Instead, the government decided not to bother doing the right thing and doing their homework, and now this has to go through committee and all kinds of processes. Why? Because the government and the minister didn't bother to use all the resources available to them to put together a bill that's succinct and addresses the problem that got struck down in the first place. I look forward to debating it more tonight.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

There are two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Bisson: If there are four minutes for questions and comments and two minutes for response, I'll take it all.

Just in reverse order, the member for Hamilton East makes a very good point, and that is, one of the reasons I believe this bill has to be referred back to committee is that if you look at the decision by the court, some of the very things the court ruled as unconstitutional in the old bill, the existing bill, are still found in this bill. So we scratch our heads and go, "Hang on a second; we're going through this whole process. Why? So that we can go back to court yet again, be challenged yet again, lose yet again and have to bring another piece of legislation?" We need to make sure we get this right. We understand the courts have made a decision. Let's get it right.

This bill has to go to committee. I wouldn't say it has to have a lot of time. I'm not going to stand here and say, "Let's travel this bill to every community across Ontario." No. I think it has to have some time in committee in order to amend those sections of the bill that are still offensive to the decision of the court.

To the chief government whip: Yes, I hear what you're saying, and I think education is really the best way to go. Sometimes that's frustrating, because people sometimes don't pay attention to ratings when it comes to movies or books or whatever, and sometimes parents don't listen to the advice given by schools and others when it comes to the type of material that's in the hands of our young people. So how you deal with that becomes a very tough issue within a democratic society like ours. I'm with the member: I don't want to be in a position as a legislator, and I know he don't—and that's good English, by the way: "He don't." I'm doing that for a friend of mine who always gets aggravated when I use that kind of English, and just in case you're watching, I did it again. I only say, I agree with him. This is not something we, as legislators, want to do. Free speech is something that's basic to democracy, and we need to respect that.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It's a pleasure to get up and speak, not so much to this bill, but to the principle of the bill: censorship, classification and having people able to put forward the type of material they wish to put forward, as they see fit.

One of the things I found interesting, apart from this bill—obviously, it's a government bill and it seems to be the type of action that the government has been taking on a regular basis. But it was somewhat of a problem today when we had a whole group of farmers in front of the Legislature trying to get their message out. It wasn't in film format, but it very well could have been. It could have been taped and played for, I suppose, "How to get the ear of your government." The two choices, of course, would be the Liberal way, \$10,000 to talk to the Premier, or make a film and then see if it would fit this classification and whether you could show it on TV.

What's more, I just wanted to point out that the people who were demonstrating out front today had a number of things that they wanted the government to hear. Since they haven't got the film made, they wanted to come here to Queen's Park and speak to the government. The Premier and the Minister of Agriculture decided that they were not well-enough organized, they did not have the sanction of the government as a standing group that represents the agriculture community. I went out to see. Every one of them I spoke to who was talking about the problems in rural Ontario and the agriculture problems was a farmer. They were the same farmers who were there a week ago. But this government has decided that they weren't going to listen to them.

They wanted to be heard anyway, so they asked one of the opposition members—and, of course, this is the job of the Queen's loyal opposition—to bring forward a message that they don't believe is being heard by the government. That should be for the opposition to bring that forward. But because of the classification and the approach that we have in this House, when our member Mr. Barrett from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant got up to ask for unanimous consent to bring their message to us as legislators and to the government of Ontario, the govern-

ment House leader put on the record that no, he was not going to give unanimous consent for that.

So in order to follow the rules, I wanted to make sure that I tied this to the bill that we are presently debating. Having done that, I think it's a form of classification and restriction on what you can and can't present, in whatever way you like.

For the record and for all those present and those who will in the future read the Hansard, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to read what the good folks on the front lawn wanted to present to this Legislature through my good friend Mr. Barrett. This isn't a situation where the member opposite can rise on a point of order, because I haven't done anything yet, so if you would be so kind as to give me that opportunity. But I think it is an issue that becomes very important for the people I represent and those people who were here and are convinced at this point that the government has turned its back on them. I think they have a right to be heard, so I'm going to read this into the record, for your benefit, Mr. Speaker. It is suggested here that it be tabled in the Legislature and, of course, I wanted to do that verbally because I don't want to secretly bring it in.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The theatre outside earlier this afternoon notwithstanding, the member from Oxford is no longer discussing Bill 158.

The Speaker: So far, he has not said anything that is irrelevant to the bill. I'll hear him first to find out if it's relevant.

1540

Mr. Hardeman: I do want to relate this all back to the fact that we are talking about censorship and classification of our communication system. That's what we saw earlier, and that's what we will continue to see if the member across keeps getting up and suggesting that we're not talking about the right topic.

The first item is the Right of Ownership Act. This is what the people outside were wanting. Again, this deals with what government should be doing, as opposed to how we regulate the film industry, for all communication modes: "The right to own, use, enjoy, and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy."

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is reading a motion on a totally different topic. Right of land ownership has absolutely nothing to do with censorship or film classification.

The Speaker: Just help the House a bit on this, it seems to me that the act is to replace the Theatres Act and to amend other acts in respect of film, and I hope that the member will address his comments in that regard.

Mr. Hardeman: I can assure you that it may take me a little while, but I think it's very important that one uses all the tools available to explain what I think is wrong with what the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is putting forward here, as to how it restricts people's right to communicate and how the government

has done that today without even having had this bill passed. I think the lack of need for this bill is very important in this debate, and that's why I think this becomes very important.

"However, this right does not supersede or allow an individual to cause harm or injury to another. Ownership rights shall not be abridged or usurped without due process of law and shall include full, fair and timely compensation. The federal government shall be requested to amend Canada's Constitution by inclusion"—

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Nowhere in Bill 158 is ownership of land discussed. May we please respectfully ask the member for Oxford to discuss Bill 158?

Mr. Hardeman: Speaker, on that same point of order: I would point out that if the member across the aisle would like to read the bill to me, then maybe I could tell that it isn't there or that it is there. I don't know. You're making a point here, but I do believe that we have the right to debate as we see fit to debate. But I notice that we're going to have difficulty. The gentleman—

The Speaker: I would like to remind the member again to stick to the point and to the bill, as stated in the orders of the day. Please stick to the bill.

Mr. Hardeman: I sure would not want to infringe upon the ruling of the Chair. I think it's very important to show respect for the Chair, so I will leave that. It's obvious that the government side does not want to hear from the people who were here today to try and speak to them. The minister wouldn't come out, the Premier wouldn't talk to them, and now the members in this House are not prepared to hear what they had to say.

But I'm sure that the member opposite would not object—and obviously I think it's very important, because it is an important day for agriculture—to reference to what the Minister of Agriculture has to say about freedoms and the right to speak and who's responsible for the problems we have, maybe not just in the film industry but generally across the board, and particularly in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Again, I think that's very important, as our livelihood depends on the food part of that.

Now, the Minister of Agriculture and Food was speaking in London yesterday. Typically, as has been the case with the Minister of Agriculture and Food in the past—Mr. Speaker, I know you're wondering when I'm going to get back to the bill, but I am. I just ask for your indulgence for about 15 minutes, and then I intend to come right back to it.

The Speaker: I would remind the member that he has 11 minutes and 23 seconds. If it takes 15 minutes, it will be outside the scope of the time.

Mr. Hardeman: I think it's very important that, as we relate to agriculture and the importance of it in our society, one of the problems the agricultural community has is the inability to convince or to deal with the general public to understand agriculture. Of course, this is where it comes to film classification, because the best way to communicate in our society, as I found out in two previ-

ous elections, is to make a film. People tend to absorb better when they see it, as opposed to when they just hear it. Just sending out a message or sending out a letter will not get the message out. If you want to get the people of our province to understand agriculture, then to make a film and distribute that will do a very good job.

Of course, in classification, it becomes a big problem as to how you would classify the actual goings-on on a farm and whether that would be—incidentally, a lot of people in this province and some of the members who represent the more urban parts of the province may not realize it, but if you put some of the things that are on a farm in a film, they would not necessarily be very—

Mr. Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Referring again to standing order 23(b)(i), the rural-urban division in Ontario and points of agriculture are covered nowhere in Bill 158. Bill 158's text, for the member from Oxford, is underneath his desk if he wishes to haul it out and read it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The member from Mississauga West, I've only just sat down, so I've only heard a couple of sentences.

I would remind the member that this is about the censorship bill and would ask you to continue with your speech.

Mr. Hardeman: I'm somewhat taken aback that the member from Mississauga West is so insistent upon the fact that he does not want to hear my debate, and upon that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: We have a motion for adjournment of the debate. Shall the motion carry? I heard some nos.

All those in favour? All those opposed? I think the nays have it. It's not carried.

Go ahead.

Mr. Hardeman: I just want to point out that it's obvious that they do want to hear the debate, so I'll carry on in the same vein. Obviously, if they didn't want to hear the debate, they would have voted in favour of adjourning the debate. So I thank them for that vote of confidence.

The minister was in London speaking to our grain and oilseed producers, talking about the crisis they're in. I read the newspaper report on it, and I found it kind of interesting that after all we've said and all the things the minister has said here in the House about what he was doing for agriculture and what he was doing to look after our farmers in Ontario, when he went to London, and when the farmers asked him—

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's clear that the honourable member has not read the bill. He's not interested in debating the bill. This is a bill about film classification. I think out of respect for other members who have come to this House prepared to debate this specific piece of legislation—the previous Speaker in the Chair ruled three or four times that the member was not following the rules. I'm a new member here. I ask the honourable member, who has some

experience, to please, in the spirit of co-operation, follow the rules of procedure, and if not, I would ask the Speaker to rule him out and go on to someone who wants to legitimately speak about Bill 158. I think that's the fair thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: The member's point is well taken.

I would ask you to confine yourself to Bill 158 and the subject at hand.

Mr. Hardeman: I think the minister opposite makes a very, very good point, not so much about what I'm saying, but about the bill and censorship and classification. Is the member opposite, a minister of the crown, standing up and thinking that because he doesn't like what I say, he can suggest to the Speaker of this place that he should just take my right to speak away and let someone else speak, because he doesn't believe I'm sticking to the topic that he would like to hear about? The trouble is that the bill the minister has proposed really doesn't lend itself to a quality debate, because it does so little, and it does so much to take away the people's rights in this province. I think I would much sooner speak more about the general trend of what this government is doing and point out to the public and to the people of Ontario that not only this bill but a lot of the other bills the government is putting forward are not where we as a province would like to go.

1550

The member opposite was talking about censoring and so forth, and what the bill does, and the classification of films. But I think it becomes very important that we all recognize that there's a process in this place. We all have to do and say what is important to the people we represent, not only on what you have put forward but on what we think is wrong with what you put forward, in general terms. That's really what I was doing today. I suppose you could side with the government side and suggest that unless people are saying what you want them to say, you should take away their right to say it. I don't believe that's how this system should work and I don't think that I'd be quite prepared to have it approached that way. I don't believe this Speaker would do that.

I do want to say that I think it's important that we speak to the issue that is most important to the people we represent. When I get this opportunity to speak, I am going to do just that.

As far as the other issues, I think what we're really seeing here is that we're talking about censoring—

Interjection.

Mr. Hardeman: No, not censoring; I think the minister takes exception to that word too. So we're talking about classification of films and how they should be classified.

Interjection.

Mr. Hardeman: Now the member says I should talk about a totally different subject.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Talk about your values. What would you censor?

Mr. Hardeman: I thought the minister said this wasn't about censoring.

Mr. McMeekin: Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Hardeman: It's not what I'm saying, it's what the minister said. My problem here is not with what's in the bill; it's with the government's intent on all these things to take over people's lives. Yes, I want censoring. I want the right type of films before my children. Incidentally, my children have got to the point where they pretty well decide themselves what they're going to see, but I can understand that a lot needs to be done in order to make sure that things aren't on the TV that I don't want my children to see.

But we all know that in the practice of this government, as we debate these bills, the minister is not going to change anything in it depending on what I have to say. So, to be honest, I find it much more important to talk about what I think the people of Ontario need to know about what the government is doing and why they're doing it and, in my opinion, what they're doing wrong. That's why I go back to the industry that was here today—agriculture—and how the government is treating the farmers of our province. It's not just my opinion. Obviously, it's in the paper today.

It's quite clear that the members opposite don't want to hear what I have to say. I'm very sorry to hear that. Again, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry, I didn't hear, but I understand you moved adjournment of the debate. Is that correct?

Mr. Hardeman: Yes.

The Acting Speaker: I would have to rule that out of order. You've already moved it once; you cannot move it again.

Mr. Hardeman: I misspoke. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: A motion to adjourn the House. Shall the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it. I do not believe, Mr. Barrett, that you're in your seat. I cannot count you.

I'm going to ask again. Everybody is in their seats.

Hon. Mr. Watson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member wasn't in his seat. Another member came in. Clearly there were not five people. We have to go on. Mr. Hardeman has another 30 seconds or so. I think we have to follow the rules. If someone isn't in their seat, it doesn't count. So I would ask—

The Acting Speaker: I have told the member that the other member was walking in. I'm trying to be fair to everyone here in the House. I'm going to ask again if there are five members who are going to stand to this. All right, then, do we have five members?

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1555 to 1625.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Hardeman, the member from Oxford, has moved adjournment of the House.

Would all those in favour please stand and remain standing to be counted.

All those opposed will please stand and remain standing while you are counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 5; the nays are 37.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is lost.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's certainly my pleasure to have the opportunity to make comments on the prior debate. I have to say that this bill is a long time coming. I say that because, quite frankly, I think it was the result of a Supreme Court decision back about a year ago, if not more, that indicated that the government needed to act on a decision in regard to the Glad Day books case. As a result, they needed to update the legislation, the Theatres Act, and in fact had about a year to do so. The time is ticking away, the clock is running down, and here we are at the 11th hour with the government finally bringing this bill forward.

The thing that's problematic about it, quite frankly, is that they have not bothered to take the effort to put the appropriate measures in place to address the very issue that was raised by the judge in regard to this case. It's really disappointing. I have to tell you, quite frankly, that it begs the question, to a new member like myself, as to why the government bothers bringing these things forward if they know very well that in fact they don't address the very problem that they were supposed to address in the drafting of this bill. It's extremely frustrating, and I can't for the life of me figure out with why, when they claim to have such an aggressive agenda and so many things they want to accomplish and so much they want to get done, they bring forward a bill like Bill 158.

Quite frankly, if it were addressing the issues that it was supposed to address, I'm sure that my caucus would be very happy to support it; the problem is, it doesn't. So now it's got to go through the process of committee because, quite frankly, it needs to be cleaned up. It needs some amendments. Notwithstanding all of the resources that are available to the minister, the bottom line is that they put forward a bill that needs to have some serious improvements to it. I actually look forward to the opportunity to bring those improvements forward in my debate, which I'll be bringing to you in the next few minutes. Thank you for this opportunity.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I thank the honourable member for Hamilton East because, while I disagree with many of her premises, she talked about the bill. The member from Oxford—I think I've gotten to know him; he's a nice gentleman, and I appreciate his point of view—unfortunately didn't talk about Bill 158.

Bill 158 is the Film Classification Act. This is not about censorship; it's about film classification, and the censorship powers are limited to adult sex films with obscene content. I'm assuming the honourable member from Oxford is not in support of seeing sex films with adult content that are in breach of the Criminal Code. I

hope that he would be very clear and let individuals know that the breaches of the Criminal Code that are specifically laid out—those are the types of films that will be referred to the police by the Film Review Board. It's very clear. This meets the spirit and the intent of the judge's decision in the Glad Day case.

1630

Bill 158 has been worked on thoroughly by our ministry staff, which I'm very appreciative of, as well as staff and legal counsel from the Attorney General. I would hope that members would support this piece of legislation to allow us to continue the good work that the Film Review Board does with respect to classification. I know my friend the member from Erie knows the good work of the Film Review Board. I'm sure he snuck in from time to time to see a few of those films himself. That's what I was told. I know he enjoyed that aspect of the job very much. I've embarrassed him, and I apologize for that. The fact is that Bill 158 is a good piece of legislation, it's well thought out and I ask for the House's support.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm glad to offer comment on my hard-working colleague the member for Oxford's remarks. I agree with what the member for Oxford was bringing forward. I think there is a sense of frustration in the opposition with respect to some of the priorities the government has set in this particular session. My colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services has worked very hard on this legislation. He makes a very adept presentation.

I actually did not, to make sure the record is clear, have a chance to sneak in. I enjoyed working with the board, but never had a chance to see them at work. Although, as a former customs inspector, one of our jobs was to seize material at the border that did not meet with Canadian law. So I think in my time—

Mr. Levac: Where is it?

Mr. Hudak: You put it in a plastic bag, you put it in a vault and it gets destroyed. Some of that stuff you see once and you never want to see it again. So I've done my time in that sort of thing, and I'm still trying to shake off the effects of some of the things that the minister refers to.

I do want to say, with all due respect to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, that it's interesting we began this session—I think on the evening of the first day of this session—debating this bill, and we are ending this session debating this bill. I know it's a priority for the minister, but I wonder if it is a priority for the province of Ontario.

I don't recall, in any of this session, debating health care. Not one health bill, which is probably the top priority of the province, was brought forward to this chamber for debate. The deteriorating finances of the province of Ontario and the government's backing down on financial commitments, adding more and more to the Dalton McGuinty deficit, was not the focus of debate in this chamber in this session.

I wish we had more time for debate on the greenbelt issue and any connections or contributions the Ontario

Liberal Party may have played in the exemption that a developer got in the city of Vaughan. So while this minister was doing a fine job presenting this legislation, I just worry that priorities have been terribly mislaid. I wish also, as municipal affairs critic, that Bill 92, which has not had an hour of debate since its introduction in June 2004, would have come to the table.

Mr. Bisson: To the member from Oxford, I guess a couple of things I wouldn't mind hearing him comment on: One is the issue that the member from Hamilton East raised—I hadn't thought about this, and it's actually a very good point—as you read the court decision, the court decision is very specific about sections of the old act, the existing act, that don't conform with the Charter of Rights, and so therefore the courts have ordered that this old act be amended. That's why we're having this debate today, and that's why we're making the changes.

However, as she correctly points out—I went to my office, I called it up on the Internet, I read the judgment, I had a chance to read the bill again, and it's clear; I think she's right—there are sections of this bill that don't comply with the judge's decision, so—

Hon. Mr. Watson: Where did you do your law degree, Gilles?

Mr. Bisson: I don't pretend that I've got a law degree. But it's clear there's some question of doubt here. I would say to the member from Oxford—his thoughts about making sure that we have some time in committee in order to fix the problems that the minister has created. His law degree is not any better than mine, it looks like. I don't have one, so I don't have to make this argument. I just go for lunch at the law society; that's all I do there. It's great lunches, a wonderful place if you can go.

I just say to the member for Oxford, it would be interesting to take a look at that more specifically, and if the government really feels they are in compliance with the judgment, then they can defend that at committee, we can hear the arguments and move on. At least we can do the job well.

The other issue is, I would like to know what his feelings are vis-à-vis the whole issue of censorship. I agree, there has to be a rating system that makes sense so that consumers can make informed choices. As individuals in society and as parents, we all understand that. But as I read the bill, there is a certain amount of censorship in here, as I see it, and I want to know what his feelings are, because certainly in the New Democratic Party we are not in favour of forms of censorship. I know this is sometimes a tough issue, and sometimes hard on society, but in a democracy you have to allow people to speak their ideas, even though they may be in the minority position.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oxford has two minutes in which to comment.

Mr. Hardeman: I want to thank my colleagues from Timmins—James Bay, Hamilton East and Erie—Lincoln, and the minister for his kind comments. I want to assure the minister that I believe there is a need for classification and making sure that the films that are in cir-

ulation are indeed the type of things that I think my children and my neighbour's children should be watching. At the same time, I think the point I was trying to make in my presentation was that there are a lot of things that are important that this government is not dealing with as opposed to dealing with this.

I think the member for Erie—Lincoln made the point that this was the first bill we debated when we came back for this special sitting of the Legislature to deal with the matters the government felt were important. It's the last one we're dealing with, but it's not going to be completed before we leave here. So the importance is somewhat diminished by that. If that's how the government feels about this bill, then I think we should have been talking today about the things that are really important to the people I represent. That's why I was having some trouble getting those items before the assembly. Obviously, the government wanted me to talk about this. It's not really in their interest, but it is in the interest of keeping the debate off the other issues that I think are important: to show some leadership in health care and to get rid of some of the waiting lists there, to deal with problems we have in our rural communities.

I'm sure they are looking at some of that, but I would have liked to have some debate and some direction on that so I could tell my farmers that they will be able to plant their crops this spring with some assistance from government. That isn't what came from the minister yesterday; the minister yesterday was talking about "Don't look to me for help, look to the federal government for help." That's not good enough for the farmers. That's why I was trying to bring that up in this debate.

I do appreciate the fact that this bill is required, and I commend the minister for bringing it forward. Obviously it's under his jurisdiction and I'm very happy that he's bringing it forward to improve the classification of films to meet the court challenges. We look forward to going to committee to debate this bill further and get a bill that will serve the needs of the people of Ontario.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Before recognizing the next speaker, I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / *Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des*

modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

Bill 167, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 167, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

Bill 171, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of spousal relationships / Projet de loi 171, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les unions conjugales.

FILM CLASSIFICATION ACT, 2005

(continued)

LOI DE 2005

SUR LE CLASSEMENT DES FILMS

(suite)

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: It certainly is my pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon to debate Bill 158. I have to say, first of all, I was listening with bated breath, waiting to hear that Bill 70 had achieved royal assent. I didn't hear that and I'm quite shocked. Here we are months and months after a big, high-profile issue in my own community from the very same minister who has had a couple of bills tonight achieve royal assent and who has this bill now in second reading. Yet, the bill that caused such a kerfuffle and that he was so anxious to get before the Legislature, so anxious to have debated and so concerned about protecting the interests of the public when it came to bad business practices in a particular sector—it became quite an issue in my own community—and he's nowhere to be seen.

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I think it's quite ironic that, on the one hand, we have this knee-jerk bill brought forward by the minister, which hasn't even achieved royal assent tonight, that claimed to have all these extra bonuses in terms of protecting the consumer—which it didn't, in fact; it was merely a housekeeping bill, and we all know it; that was raised quite clearly by the media and others—and yet here we are, on the other hand, juxtaposed against that, debating Bill 158, which has been a long time coming, which in fact is really late and should have been here a long time ago.

I hope the government doesn't try to pretend that people like myself and the members of my party, the members of my caucus, are trying to hold up the bill by insisting on scrutiny at committee level. In fact, what we're trying to do is to make sure this bill gets the appropriate scrutiny that is required, because from my understanding of what is in Bill 158 and what it's supposed to be doing, the two don't match. What we have is a bill—not dissimilar from Bill 70—that purports to address an issue and in fact does not do that at all.

I say that because, as has been mentioned in this debate thus far, it's very clear that there was an obligation by this government to undertake some proactive

measures that would modernize or update existing legislation so that it reflected a court ruling that struck down existing legislation. As I mentioned in my opportunities earlier, that was done quite some time ago. My understanding is, the clock started ticking about April 30, which is almost a full year ago, for the government to get this done. Again, this is one of those housekeeping-type measures that could have been brought in and moved forward at any time, but now the government's back is against the wall and this issue needs to be dealt with.

I have to say that, on the one hand, I'm pleased it is finally here, after all this time waiting, but I am a little bit disconcerted because, unfortunately, the opportunity to do the right thing and move this issue through the process in an appropriate and effective way has been missed by the government once again and we're in a situation where we have many concerns about what is before us.

I say that because, interestingly enough, there's a bit of a joke—and I don't know if people have been watching for the whole evening so far—about who's a lawyer and who's not a lawyer and whether we have the capabilities to appropriately criticize this bill with regard to its legal force. As you may know, the critic in the party I'm with, the caucus I'm with, is in fact a lawyer and has had an opportunity to review this. He comes to the conclusion, as a result of extensive consultation with many people in the field, that this bill does not do what it is supposed to do, but it simply rephrases the very pieces of the previous legislation that were inappropriate and struck down in the first place. It's quite frustrating to have to deal with that fact, but nonetheless, that's what we're here for. That's why we have all these sets of eyes in the various caucuses, looking at these pieces of legislation, these bills that are brought forward by the government. It's quite appropriate that we discovered this issue and recognized that clause 2(b) of the charter, which has been identified as what the previous legislation, the Theatres Act, was in contravention of, has also been contravened by this bill, Bill 158, which is purported to address that problem.

I have to say that I did have the opportunity to attend the leadoff speech of our critic, the member from Niagara Centre, Mr. Peter Kormos. He was quite informative in his leadoff speech on this particular issue and I found it very interesting. I have to admit that, when pieces of legislation come forward, I'll read the bill—in this case, Bill 158, An Act to replace the Theatres Act and to amend other Acts in respect of film—and it will refer oftentimes to other pieces of legislation. It's sometimes difficult, particularly as someone who's fairly new, walking through some of these bills and trying to get a context for what these various clauses refer back to in the previous legislation. Nonetheless, it was a good opportunity for me to understand, in broad strokes, the intent of the bill.

As was mentioned by the member from Timmins—James Bay, Mr. Bisson, what this bill was supposed to do, what the judge said the government needed to do, was to withdraw or extract from our legislation, from our

realm of powers, the right to censor material, because that's not something that the charter allows us to do. The government was told, "You go and deal with the fact that your legislation is out of date when it comes to film classification, particularly the Theatres Act, and review that with this judgment as a result of this Glad Day Books case. Deal with your legislation and make it fit the current framework of the charter." That's fine. That's the job that was given to the government about a year ago. Unfortunately, they came back with something that doesn't achieve that task. I have to say, as the member from Timmins-James Bay was saying, it's the issue of censorship.

Again, I'm a parent. I have a son who is 12 years old, and I can tell you, I very much appreciate the ratings system. I appreciate the fact that when I go to a video store with him and he comes to me with a video cover, gives it to me and says, "Mummy, can I rent this one?" I just take one look at it—it has a big M on it, which means "mature"—and I say, "Julian, it has an M on it." "I know, Mummy." "What does that M mean, Julian?" "It means 'mature,' Mummy." I say, "Julian, you're 12 years old. That means that that's not for you. That's for kids who are older than you. In fact, that's for kids who are older than teens. That's for adults. You can't rent that video," or, "You can't rent that movie."

I'm an active parent, quite frankly, and I have to tell you, interestingly enough, that my son, Julian Leonetti—and I hope Julian is watching tonight, but he might not be, and that's OK. He's probably doing his homework, which would be a good thing. As a parent, of course, I have many friends in my own age group who are also parents. In fact, my own sister, Susanne Benvenuti, has two daughters, Kate-Lynn and Sarah. Sarah is just a young one, so these issues don't come up, but Kate-Lynn is two years older than my son. My niece Kate-Lynn is 14 years old. There have been times when my sister and I have talked about the different movies that they've rented that were not rated appropriate for her age group, or were. For example, there's a particular movie that she told me she and her daughter were going to rent and watch, and I thought, "Oh, my gosh, you're going to rent that movie and watch it with your daughter? I don't know if that's appropriate."

There is the rub about who decides what's appropriate for who, and there is the rub around why censorship is inappropriate, because after speaking to my sister a little bit further, we discussed what was in that movie and what was not, what the messages were and what they weren't. We also discussed the fact that they were going to watch it together and talk about some of the issues that were being raised in that movie, and they were going to debrief, if you will. They were going to come up with some discussion. My sister, in fact, was going to use that film as a way of dealing with some very tender issues of a young girl who, at the time, was 13 years old.

There you have it. The bottom line is, when it comes to film classification, certainly that's an important piece of our regime or our structure around how we deal with

films and how we deal with that art form in the province of Ontario. But when it crosses that line to say that we decide in isolation of any other context, whether that context be age, whether that context be religious, cultural, or whether that line be just the fact that somebody is going to watch something with another person or not, a.k.a. a parent and a child, it is not our decision to make; it is the decision of the individual. The kinds of films and the kinds of materials out there that are perhaps offensive to some may not be offensive to others, that are perhaps distressing to some may not be distressing to others.

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I know the minister talks about this issue of the Criminal Code. That's the bottom line. The Criminal Code exists, and that's where that kind of material gets dealt with. It doesn't have to get dealt with in a censorship capacity by this province. In fact, if it does get dealt with in a censorship capacity by this province through Bill 158, then, guess what? We're doing exactly what the judge said we're not supposed to do. We are not supposed to be censoring the films. We're not supposed to be censoring. We are supposed to, and are allowed and are able—in fact, it is our responsibility—to classify so that when I go to the video store with my son and he tries to tell me, "This one's OK, Mummy. It's just got blood and guts and violence," and I say, "No, honey, that's not OK"—that's what this whole classification thing is all about. That's appropriate, because it gives parents the opportunity to have the measuring stick, or the guidepost, if you will, that enables them to control or to adjust what their children are dealing with or being exposed to and are spending time with.

It's interesting, and I really got a chuckle in part of this debate—I can't recall, unfortunately, who was making the point. But there was one member who was up talking about—I have to say, and I probably shouldn't because I'm not positive; I'd have to go back in the Hansard—I suspect it was the minister. If I'm not mistaken, there was a lot of fanfare around the fact that a couple of major retailers and video stores, and I'm not going to name them, were in line with the government. They were backing up this initiative, they were going to be right in behind the government, and they were going to make sure that no young people were sold or rented the ratings that were inappropriate for their age. They were right behind the government, saying, "Yes. We agree with this. This is the greatest thing."

That's great, but do you know what? The bottom line is, it's not the big guys who are going to be the ones where kids get stuff they're not supposed to get. I have to say to you, if kids want to get something that they shouldn't have their hands on, if they're going to rent something that's beyond the appropriate rating for them, it's not going to happen at the big guys' store. Right? It's going to happen somewhere else. It's going to happen at a friend's house or at a store that has perhaps not got the rules or codes of conduct and all those kinds of things that the big guys have.

It's not the government's role in censorship that's going to make a difference as to how children access and/or view and/or partake in these various inappropriate things that are produced. It's not the government's role at all. In fact, it is the support system of any human being, whether that be a parent or an older sibling or perhaps, for children who don't happen to have parents, a guardian or other kinds of support systems around those children. Those are the people, quite frankly, who cocoon them or put the cone around them not only in terms of their access to what's appropriate and what's inappropriate, but when they are watching TV at 11 o'clock at night and see some pretty racy things—because who's kidding who; they are there—or when they are in a video store or in the mall or walking downtown and looking at one of those electronic billboards and seeing quite explicit things. Those are the people who are going to have the discussions about dignity, about the value of human beings, about positive language and positive images around sexuality. It's those kinds of things that will affect a person's ability to cope with the kinds of images that are bombarding every airwave and every place where these kinds of things are available.

It's not a matter of government censorship making a difference; it's a matter of the ability of a parent or a close personal contact to help these young people get through the masses of information and pieces of media, whether it's photographic or literature or anything else. It's not a matter of the government's responsibility—not that it's not their responsibility, but it's not their role, it's not their job. In fact, that's exactly what the courts decided, that the whole issue of censorship is not the responsibility of the government; in fact, it's not the role of the government. The problem with Bill 158, as it is before us—my understanding of it as a result of the review that's been done by my critic and by the members of our staff—is that there are pieces of this legislation that still allude to a censorship role that the government has. Quite frankly, at this point, that's totally inappropriate. What we need, in fact, is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. There are a number of conversations.

Ms. Horwath: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: I was just trying to calm the place down. It's getting harder and harder to hear you. So please continue.

Ms. Horwath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So there are parts of this legislation that, of course, need to be here that are the responsibility of the government in the realm of classification, in the realm of providing the opportunities for parents and other caregivers to identify and to classify which films and which pieces of media are appropriate for which age level. Certainly, as a parent, that's something that I appreciate and that I think is quite appropriate.

However, if I can mention one of the other things that I've heard some concerns about, in my very few minutes that are left—in fact, the member from Trinity-Spadina,

Mr. Rosario Marchese, mentioned it to me just today—it's that there is apparently a number of small, independent filmmakers who have a certain non-mainstream genre of filmmaking that is, again—and it's not the sex stuff—very specific to their own particular interests. They are concerned that they are required to submit their films, at a cost to be determined, as to whether they need to be classified or not. Again, they feel that that's a hardship in terms of their very difficult circumstances in regard to being able to afford the production of their art.

I would only say that it's not only the big issue as to whether or not censorship is or is not reinforced in Bill 158 or reincarnated in Bill 158 the way it was not supposed to be, but there are also some very particular and specific issues that have been raised with us and members of our caucus around what needs to be going through the rather onerous process of classification and what does not.

I can recall getting a bit of a chuckle from our critic the member from Niagara Centre, in his lead on this particular bill, because he was very tongue-in-cheek, as he often is, talking about whether or not Dora the Explorer and Bob the Builder and SpongeBob SquarePants need to be classified, and in fact, that might be a waste of resources. Funny enough—and we chuckle—because I think a member of my caucus who tends to sit beside me usually actually has some ties that have some of those people on them, particularly SpongeBob SquarePants.

Nonetheless, the bottom line is, are there ways to streamline or in some way reduce the onus on producers of film, independent filmmakers, whose films are not in the risky category, if you will, to find ways, perhaps through a committee process and through their coming to committee and having their say in regard to this legislation, to make sure that they are not inadvertently or inappropriately burdened by this legislation if it can be avoided? If it can't be avoided, fine, but let's have that debate, let's have that discussion, let's have those people in, let's hear what their concerns and opinions are, and let's see if there is a way we can accommodate those concerns, because, quite frankly, the bottom line is that, at the end of the day, I think what we all want to achieve is a piece of legislation that not only addresses the concerns that were raised in the Glad Day Bookshops case, but does it in such a way that meets the requirements of this province and also of the filmmakers of this province to be able to continue to produce their art in a very appropriate and productive way.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. McMeekin: I'm always pleased to follow my esteemed colleague from Hamilton East, even on those occasions when she may, in her 20-minute ramble, say something, somewhere that I agree with.

I'm old school. I believe in only having the government we need. I believe that. But at the same time, we must insist on all the government we require. That's why we have a Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): A great minister.

Mr. McMeekin: A great minister. The fundamental job of the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, as my colleague opposite knows, is to protect consumers. To protect consumers means in large part that consumers need to be informed. On this issue, some people are so narrow-minded that their ears are touching and some are so open-minded that their brains are falling out. The simple truth of the matter is that you don't have to be a lawyer to have standards, you don't have to be a lawyer to have family values—my friend opposite mentioned lawyers—and you don't need to be a lawyer to understand that Kate-Lynn and Sarah may be very fortunate to have a responsible, mature parent who has time to sit down when they watch something and say, “Hey, Kate-Lynn and Sarah, how do you feel about this?” There are a lot of parents out there who don't have that kind of time and have come to government and have said, “Look, we don't all have perfect judgment and government has a role to help us, and to work with retail partners who want to sit down and help us as well.”

That's why we're bringing forth this legislation, because it's responsible, prudent and responds to the kinds of demands we're hearing from consumers throughout Ontario.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This debate on Bill 158 is droning on to the final hour. I guess I question why we came back for this, why the House came back in February for a number of the pieces of legislation we've been dealing with: pit bulls, for example, and smoke-free Ontario. We came back for this. I understand these are relatively minor alterations. I assume this has already been worked out by the Supreme Court. Perhaps we're going through a bit of a charade, if this is nothing more than a revamping of the film classification system. I suggest it's perhaps one more piece.

I understand you have to obtain a licence from the government for any person to distribute films or to exhibit an unclassified film. How far does that go? Where does that lead? Certainly in the month of February we have heard mention of the paternalism of this government, couched in phrases like “the continued creation of a nanny state in the province of Ontario,” principles that seem to have been guiding this Liberal government for well over a year now. It opens the door for a certain liberalization of measures.

This isn't a big concern in my riding, but people are now allowed to take their own bottle of wine into a restaurant. I question, where does this government go? It is telling children what they can or cannot eat in school, for example. I assume there will be administrators empowered to search young people for Snickers bars.

Mr. Bisson: I find myself again agreeing with the member for Hamilton East, and she's in my own caucus. It's amazing. I thought you guys would get a kick out of that.

I think she makes a point, and it's a good one. I don't know where I go with this one but it makes me think a little bit. This bill deals with the issue of film classification. Fine. That's what the bill is all about. But part of

the issue we have in our society is that it's pretty darned hard for government to classify everything that moves. How do you deal with the issue of classification of books, magazines, articles, music and all that? I just think it's an interesting point to raise. The chief government whip raised it earlier in his comments on my speech, and I agree with him that there have been attempts on the part of some parents and schools and others to give parents some warning about what their kids are listening to, watching, reading, doing, so that we can give our children better advice about what we think is suitable. We'll never agree on their music. I've got to say that my mom and dad never agreed with my music, and quite frankly, I couldn't stand rap with my young girls when they were teenagers. I don't know what the pages are listening to these days, but I'm sure there's a generation gap there as well. I'm not talking about those kinds of views—those are issues of style—but I'm just saying things that are inappropriate.

I think she raises a very good point: At what point does government have to take responsibility for the self-censorship and self-rating we need to do as individuals in a society? I think that's a good point. I guess that's why I've been a little bit uncomfortable through this whole debate. As I said in my own comments earlier, I really have a problem with censorship overall, because I believe in a democratic society. Democracy should be strong enough to stand up to attacks within. That's the beauty of what democracy is all about.

I think she raises a point that's worth considering. That's why we should go to committee.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The member from Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Scarborough Southwest, Mr. Speaker, but it's close. They're both nice ridings.

I want to thank the member from Hamilton East for her comments, and I look forward to further debate on this issue.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Hamilton East has two minutes in which to respond.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Timmins–James Bay and—

Mr. Berardinetti: Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Horwath: Scarborough Southwest. I knew it was one of those Scarborough ones. Anyway, I want to thank them very much for their comments, the last one very brief, as a matter of fact.

I think the bottom line is that everybody recognizes that this bill is required and necessary, or at least that some incarnation of this bill is required and necessary, because the courts indicated it needs to be updated. But as always, the devil is in the detail. I say “devil” because, quite frankly, if we get it wrong, then guess what? It goes through the courts again, and who the heck needs to waste all that time and money going through the courts again?

The point is, let's get it right the first time. Let's make sure that what we're doing is within the realm of what's required. But at the same time, let's also recognize that as a government, yes, we have a certain role in regard to providing the required classifications and the required yardsticks by which people, whether they be parents or individuals, measure the materials they are considering viewing or reading or listening to. It is the individual's choice whether or not they want to rent or buy or purchase or view those kinds of materials. Our job really has to be to be out of the censorship business and to ensure we are completely out of that business.

Let's make Bill 158, through the process of committee hearings, absolutely airtight in regard to our obligations and our restrictions as to what we are and are not allowed to legislate in this province and in this country.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased and privileged to have this opportunity to participate this afternoon in this debate on Bill 158, the Film Classification Act. I'm very pleased the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is present in the Legislature for this important debate this afternoon and is taking note of the comments that are being brought forward by the opposition members and the government members who choose to participate in this debate. I had an opportunity to have the minister in my office this afternoon for a few brief minutes. It was good to have him up on the fourth floor. I know he was interested in what those offices looked like, and perhaps in two and a half years, he may be more interested than he is today. Who knows?

It is a great privilege and a pleasure to have the opportunity to participate in this debate. I have listened to some of this debate from that very chair, as one of the assistant Speakers. I've heard many of the comments that have been made. This is a very important issue facing the people of the province.

"This bill repeals the Theatres Act and enacts a new act called the Film Classification Act, 2004.

"The act governs the classification and approval of film and the exhibition and distribution of film. The act provides for the offices of director, deputy director, registrar and deputy registrar.

"The act authorizes the Lieutenant Governor in Council to, by regulation, prescribe categories of film, prescribe classification schemes to be used in classifying film and designate categories of film that may not be distributed unless they have been approved. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is authorized to designate persons or bodies to carry out various enumerated functions, including: reviewing film for the purpose of classifying it, reconsidering a classification decision, determining whether a film should be approved, reconsidering an approval decision and determining whether a film is exempt under the regulations from a provision of the act."

As I said, this is a very important issue, but there are a number of other very important issues before this

important legislative body today. For two consecutive weeks we have seen farmers demonstrating on the front lawn of the Legislature who have very serious concerns about the treatment of rural Ontario. Our caucus is continuing to bring these concerns forward. We believe that the government's response to the collective voice of farm families so far has been inadequate. Certainly, when the House resumes sitting on March 29, we will continue to raise these issues unless the government takes concrete, positive steps to respond to many of these concerns.

We have a serious problem in terms of nutrient management rules and regulations. If the government is not prepared to come forward with a meaningful support program to assist the farm families who are expected to undertake these environmental upgrades, if the government is not prepared to participate with them in terms of helping them with the cost as a partner, then unfortunately many of these necessary projects are not going to be undertaken. I would again ask the Minister of Agriculture and Food and the government members who are here this afternoon to consider that.

We are also experiencing a crisis in terms of the prices of grains and oilseeds, which are at a 25-year low. Farmers literally do not have the money to plant seed in the ground in a few short weeks, and they need a support program involving the federal and provincial governments in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and the government has yet to come forward with a response to that plea.

We have concerns in terms of the greenbelt legislation and regulations that are to come forward, and certainly the farmers who are making demonstration today were seriously concerned about that issue.

Mr. Hudak: Bill 92.

Mr. Arnott: We have Bill 92, which is of course the municipal bill that municipalities are expecting to see passed before the House rises today, and our critic, the member for Erie-Lincoln, has on a number of occasions this afternoon sought unanimous consent to have that bill dealt with. If it's not dealt with, we have to wonder, and of course, inquire why that's the case.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is under fairly serious—there have been a number of serious statements made in the Legislature about his activities in recent days. The municipal councils across the province, I think, have every right to ask why this bill is not being brought forward. It was introduced some time ago, on June 8. Almost a year ago it was first introduced, and here we are today. Unfortunately, because of the fact that the government has refused to respond to many of these other serious concerns, I have no choice but to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: We have a motion for adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

With five members standing, there will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1713 to 1743.

The Acting Speaker: The members will please take their seats.

Mr. Arnott has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing while counted.

All those opposed will please stand and remain standing while counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 6; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Member from Waterloo–Wellington, you can resume debate.

Mr. Arnott: It is a privilege to continue to have the floor on this important issue, Bill 158. It is approximately 5:45, about 15 minutes before the House would normally break for the evening. I'm aware that the Liberals have a very important function that they all wish to attend tonight. As such, I will move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: We have a motion from Mr. Arnott for adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There being five members standing, we will call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1745 to 1815.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Arnott has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please stand.

All those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly: The ayes are 4; the nays are 6.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No, I'm not recognizing anyone.

It now being a quarter past 6 o'clock, I declare this House adjourned until Tuesday, March 29, 2005, at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 1816.

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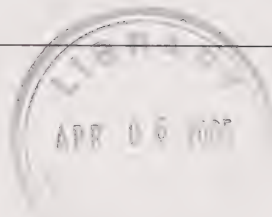
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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 March 2005

Mardi 29 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR DUFFERIN-PEEL-WELLINGTON-GREY

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Election Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers):

"Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104

"Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mr. DesRosiers:

"A writ of election dated the sixteenth day of February, 2005, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Terry W. Sutton, returning officer for the electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Ernie Eves who since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey hath tendered his resignation. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey on the seventeenth day of March, 2005, John Tory has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the twenty-fifth day of March, 2005, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"John L. Hollins

"Chief Election Officer

"Toronto, March 29, 2005."

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and the House John Tory, member-elect for the electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the honourable member take his seat.

Mr. Tory, member for the electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, is recognized as leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOCKEY

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): What a pleasure for me to rise on the day that we welcome our new leader, John Tory, into the House. But that is not the purpose of my statement today. The purpose of my statement today is to talk about what a great weekend it was in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for hockey.

On Friday night, the Pembroke Lumber Kings of the CJHL, Yzerman division, fought back from a 3-1 deficit in games to the Brockville Braves from my colleague Bob Runciman's riding, defeating the Braves in overtime and moving on to take on the Nepean Raiders. I'm hoping to disappoint John Baird and Jim Watson in the same way as they defeat that team.

On Saturday, the tournament of champions from the Bantam division for the Ottawa District Minor Hockey Association began in Barry's Bay—a two-day event, and the only way to get there was to earn the way there. On Sunday, the final was fought between Renfrew and the Valley Storm, two teams from my riding. The Valley Storm also was victorious, like the Lumber Kings, in overtime.

Also on Sunday, Dominik Hašek, "the Dominator," was the star attraction at the Pembroke Memorial Centre for the Relay for Life cancer fundraiser. Some \$30,000 were raised. John Leslie, a young boy who has lost his leg to cancer, was the first one to go after the Dominator on a shootout. The total raised was \$30,000. I want to congratulate Jimmy Lapointe and Lapointe Auto for spearheading this drive.

1340

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I too would like to welcome the newest member to the House, but that's not what my statement is about either.

One of the things our government did that speaks volumes about its long-term visionary thinking is the creation of a Ministry of Children and Youth Services, an

entire ministry devoted to nurturing, protecting and serving our future. Premier Dalton McGuinty made a brilliant appointment to lead this new signature ministry. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni grew up above a day care, she was a psychologist in the public school system and for years she dreamed about creating the kind of supportive and nurturing environment that would benefit all children from all walks of life.

Her new post was the opportunity of a lifetime to have an impact on so many, many lifetimes. A couple of weeks ago the minister, who can best be described as a glamorous earth mother, strode into Sir Wilfrid Laurier Elementary School in Hamilton and greeted the people she refers to as "boss," a group of tiny tots. She was announcing the launch of Ontario's Best Start program.

This fall, throughout the province, junior and senior kindergarten children will have access to an affordable, quality early learning program that wraps around their school day, mostly in the school setting or very near by. Over the next 10 years, the program will be expanded to include a half-day of learning for children as young as two and a half years, largely in the school setting, where it will be easier for parents to pick up and drop off all the various-age children they have. There will also be supports for new parents and their younger children and screening for newborns. I'm delighted to say that the east end of Hamilton, which includes part of my riding, will be one of three areas in the province that will have the full Best Start program.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): When the Liberals came to power in 2003, they promised a new era of democratic renewal. The Minister of Community Safety also promised to resolve the double-hatter issues with our fire services. Over one year ago, Minister Kwinter promised to bring forward a new mediation process, and if that process failed, he promised he would bring in new legislation.

So far, there's been no mediation and no legislation—and of course we know there are no new police officers—just broken promises. The minister now says that the office of the fire marshal advises him on double-hatter issues. The double-hatter issue continues. Talk about dithering.

But imagine our surprise on March 22, when, after cancelling the \$40-million promise of the former Conservative government, when questioned, ministry staff—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: So far, they could not prepare any press releases. What we're saying is that none of the official opposition or the third party were advised of a \$30-million announcement for fire training equipment. I think this is completely irresponsible and disrespectful of this House. It shows partisan politics at its very, very worst being played by the government. All the government members were allowed to see the press releases on the announcement last week, on March 22. It's very unfair,

and it's irresponsible of this minister to come forward with an announcement like that and not include all members of this House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I'm having a lot of disruption in the House. Those who wish to speak may do so outside, so I can listen to the members' statements as they go forward.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): New Democrats are glad to be back at work at Queen's Park today. We look forward to fighting to make things better for ordinary Ontario families on the issues that matter most to them, like health care, education and the environment. We're going to do our best to make this a positive, productive, progressive session of the Legislature, aren't we, Peter?

Interjections.

Ms. Churley: We hoped Dalton McGuinty would share these simple goals. We hoped he would use his time off to reflect on his broken promises and to make a new commitment to keeping his commitments. Unfortunately, though, it looks like we will see more of the same from the Liberals: more broken promises and still no plan to keep promises.

Over the last few weeks, while members of the McGuinty government were busy writing offensive notes to journalists and defending helicopter trips to the cottage by Hydro CEOs, we learned disturbing new details about the McGuinty government's not being straight with ordinary Ontario families. The Auditor General caught the Liberals fudging the books. They said they had a \$2-billion deficit; now they have a \$6-billion deficit. Now people are calling Dalton McGuinty the Six Billion Dollar Man. They are calling him the big red machine. More importantly, they're wondering, "Where's the plan to keep those election promises now?"

The New Democrats are putting the Premier on notice. In the last election, people voted to wipe out massive social deficits created by eight years of Conservative cuts. They voted to rebuild our public services. Dalton, the time for excuses is over. It's time to deliver, for a change.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I too would like to welcome Mr. Tory, my neighbour to the north, in Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, but that's not the subject of my speech. I would like to speak today, like I have on many occasions in the House, about the health care needs in my riding of Brampton Centre.

In September 2003, Dr. Bajinder Reen, a nephrologist with the William Osler Health Centre, had a dream. He wanted to find a way to engage the South Asian community in helping with the redevelopment plans of the William Osler Health Centre. The announcement by our

government to construct a new community health care facility has provided the William Osler Health Centre Foundation with an opportunity to recognize the South Asian community's contributions to the hospital foundation and the city of Brampton in a meaningful way.

In recognition of the size, scope and contribution to our society by the Canadian Sikh and the South Asian community, the board of directors announced that the emergency department for the new hospital will be named the Guru Nanak Emergency Services Department. At the naming ceremony on Sunday 6 March 2005, there was a personal financial commitment of \$914,000 made by members of the Sikh subcommittee. I would like to highlight that \$500,000 of this commitment was donated by Mr. Harpreet Sethi, a member of this committee.

I would like to thank this volunteer committee for its generosity and strong sense of citizenship. The subcommittee, the board and the hospital foundation serve as ambassadors who are willing to work on behalf of others to ensure quality health care. As well, I would like to thank Minister Smitherman for showing up that day. It's deeply appreciated.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): I want to say to our new leader, John Tory, that he's got very big shoes to fill of the former Leader of the Opposition, Bob Runciman, who I know we'd all like to congratulate for an exceptional job.

I'm pleased to rise today and speak on behalf of the millions of people in Ontario who are tremendously concerned about the health care system in Ontario. Our party, under the leadership of John Tory, has begun accepting questions through our Web site from the people of Ontario in order that we may bring their concerns to this minister and to this government. I just hope that the McGuinty government will listen and will hear those concerns.

I want to start the process today. People calling in to CFRA in Ottawa, to the Lowell Green Show, are saying that this minister doesn't have a plan and that this government is incompetent.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. I would like to hear the member from Nepean—Carleton. I'm hearing a lot of noise and disruption from the government side. Don't make me start calling names already.

Member for Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Baird: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. People calling in to CFRA say that this government is incompetent and has no plan. People called in to Bill Carroll's show on CFRB. Ian, who called in from the 404, said the McGuinty Liberals don't have their priorities straight, that they're too focused on banning pit bulls. Bill, from downtown Toronto, talked about the need for the government to properly fund the operation of health care equipment. David, who was calling from the 401, said that the health care system is a mess, that the waiting times are too long and that this government isn't making health care the priority that it should be.

I hope and pray that this government will listen to the hard-working taxpayers of the province of Ontario and fix the mess they've created in our health care system.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I also want to welcome Mr. Tory to this House.

For the very first time in 22 years, the Ontario government is investing \$30 million for training and equipment for municipal fire departments. In my riding of Markham, the Markham fire department will receive \$300,000.

Every day, our firefighters risk their lives to protect our communities. While most people run out of burning buildings, these brave men and women run in to save lives and property. We must ensure that Ontario's firefighters have the best training and tools possible.

In response to last week's very welcome announcement, John Brassard, the president of the Markham Professional Firefighters Association, said that his association is extremely pleased to see the McGuinty government follow through on its commitment by providing Ontario firefighters with \$30 million toward training and equipment.

1350

Don McClean, Markham's fire chief, praised the McGuinty government for the \$300,000 the Markham fire department received. He identified that the money will help accelerate and enhance current programs to provide Markham residents with the best possible services and expertise to reduce public safety hazards.

Once again, the McGuinty government has shown its commitment to protecting Ontario's communities and its residents. Our firefighters are true heroes in every sense of the word, and I am pleased that this funding will help reduce work-related risks while protecting these brave men and women and the communities they serve.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise today to commend the McGuinty government for increasing Ontario's supply of family physicians by creating 70% more family medicine residency positions in Ontario's five medical schools. This will result in increased care for hundreds of thousands more Ontarians.

As a result of the mess left by the previous government, Ontario needs more family doctors, and we are making that happen. As a result of this McGuinty government initiative, there will be 141 new family residency positions in Ontario by 2006, meaning 337 more family doctors ready to practise by 2008.

In my own riding of Hamilton West, this new investment will enable McMaster University to train 50% more family doctors and encourage fresh graduates to set up practices in the community.

The funding will create 22 more first-year family medicine positions at McMaster University by 2006, resulting in 63 spots, compared to the current 41. Next year, McMaster will receive an additional \$3 million for the construction of more spaces to accommodate a higher number of residents.

Dr. Cheryl Levitt, chair of McMaster's department of family medicine, told the Hamilton Spectator that this is the first major increase she has seen in 10 years. According to Dr. Levitt, this new funding means "a change on the horizon," as it "will have a dramatic impact on family practice in the community."

I'm proud of this new initiative. I'm also proud of the hard work and dedication of the Minister of Health for reinvesting in public health care across Ontario and in my own riding of Hamilton West.

GREENBELT

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I want to add my voice of welcome to Mr. Tory and then talk a bit about the greenbelt.

This government is proud to say that we are permanently protecting over 1.8 million acres of green space for generations to come.

Establishing the greenbelt will significantly improve Ontarians' quality of life in a variety of ways.

Food sovereignty is important, and prohibiting urban expansion on to farmland in the greenbelt will play a significant role in assuring adequate food supplies for future generations.

Last week we heard from the municipal leaders within the greenbelt, and they've given the McGuinty government's greenbelt an "A." Glenn De Baeremaeker, a Toronto city councillor and co-chair of the group, said, "The greenbelt is spectacular. It's bigger than the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment combined. It took environmentalists decades to protect those areas and the Liberals protected an even bigger area with the stroke of a pen."

The greenbelt is already doing its job. Ajax mayor Steve Parish, one of the three other co-chairs, said this: "Suddenly there's a realization that this underutilized land is now very valuable and must be looked at seriously."

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): We have with us this afternoon in the Speaker's gallery William G. Davis, the former Premier for our provincial Parliament from 1971 to 1985. He represented the riding of Peel in the 26th and the 27th Parliaments. Welcome.

We also have the great honour and pleasure this afternoon to have in the gallery Barb Fisher, Helen Johns and David Tsubouchi, all former members of our provincial Parliament. We want to join together to welcome them as well.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ADOPTION INFORMATION DISCLOSURE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Ms. Pupatello moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act respecting the disclosure of information and records to adopted persons and birth parents / Projet de loi 183, Loi traitant de la divulgation de renseignements et de dossiers aux personnes adoptées et à leurs pères ou mères de sang.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move without notice a motion regarding the standing committee on public accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated June 17, 2004, during the months of March, April and May 2005, the standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings until 1 p.m. and on Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): The bill I am presenting today regarding adoption disclosure has been a very long time coming. It was 78 years ago today, March 29, 1927, that the Legislature amended the Adoption Act and began sealing adoption records in Ontario.

Today I'm informing the House that our government has a plan to move Ontario's adoption information laws into the 21st century. It's a plan that draws upon the experiences of other provinces, the United States, Europe and Australia, and reflects the best adoption disclosure practices in Canada and abroad.

Over the last 17 months, I have met with stakeholders from the adoption community, including the Coalition for Open Adoption Records, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, Parent Finders and legislators. As well, most of us as legislators have met with individuals in our own ridings. These people have pleaded with us over the years to do right by them.

Some of these tireless advocates are with us today in the Legislature, and I'd like to thank them personally for their dedication and hard work on this issue. Maybe I could ask them to stand: Dr. Michael Grand, Wendy Rowney, Monica Byrne, and Karen Lynn, along with her two sons. Thank you for your tireless efforts.

1400

One of our legislators, Marilyn Churley, has relentlessly pursued this issue. We thank her for bringing this issue before the floor of this very House numerous times, along with her colleague Tony Martin at the time. Although it passed unanimously as a private member's bill, it never became law for a whole host of reasons. Marilyn Churley was able, over the years, to make this issue very personal for all of us as well.

I would particularly like to thank Premier McGuinty. May I say that he led all ministers on this initiative: children and youth, consumer and business services, the Attorney General, and community and social services. He helped by giving his commitment personally to see this bill come forward today. It did involve several ministers' leadership, consultation and compromise, and I thank them for that.

My sincere gratitude must go to the staff at my own ministry, some of whom are here today, and from my own office. In one word, they are just great, and I thank them personally.

I have heard from adult adoptees as well, many who are in this House, who have asked for the same rights as non-adopted individuals. They've asked for the ability to know their own history and their own identity. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every individual has the right to know his or her identity, his or her ethnicity. We agree.

When Ontario began sealing adoption records in 1927, it was because that was what societal norms and attitudes dictated at the time. That was over 80 years ago. It was a time when we had orphanages and insane asylums. It was a time when unwed mothers were often sent away or given ultimatums by their parents. Ontario has changed, and it's time that we change our laws as well.

Currently, there are 57,000 adopted individuals and birth relatives on the adoption disclosure register waiting to be reunited. Right now, searches to reunite families can take up to three years. Last year, only 887 of the adopted individuals and birth relatives on the register were reunited. We believe that individuals who are trying to learn about their identity and personal history should be able to do so without unnecessary hardship and delay.

Our plan will give individuals whose adoptions were finalized in Ontario the right to know about their identity and history by:

—allowing adoptees over the age of 18 to have access to copies of their original birth records that will provide them with the original birth name and may identify birth parents;

—allowing birth parents to have access to birth records and adoption orders once the adoptee has reached 19, providing the name that the child was given after the adoption;

—making all disclosure provisions for adoptions finalized in Ontario retroactive to cover all records; and

—in exceptional safety-related circumstances, allowing an adoptee the right to apply a non-disclosure order to prevent identifying information from being released.

It must be clear that the right to information is simply not the same as a right to a relationship. This is extremely important: The right to information is not the same as the right to a relationship.

That is why our plan would also respect the right of an individual not to be contacted, giving all parties the right to put a no-contact notice on their file. This means that the individual receiving identifying information would commit in writing not to contact the birth relative who requested a no-contact notice. This also means that individuals who violate a no-contact notice may be fined up to \$50,000. I would like to point out to this House that we are not aware of any individual breaching a no-contact notice anywhere in Canada or abroad. When a person files a no-contact notice, they would be asked to fill out a form that voluntarily requests family history, medical information and any other information that the person would wish to disclose.

We would also like to emphasize that while an individual would not be required to provide their medical history, it's the right thing to do, and they will be asked. This assigns the same rights and responsibilities to adoptees and birth parents as the rest of the citizenry. Every individual should know about his or her medical history, and in all jurisdictions, we cannot find a single episode where those who did not want to be contacted did not then forward medical information and any other information surrounding the circumstances of the adoption when asked. I think this sends a tremendous signal for us.

Our plan is to move forward in a way that is both thoughtful and responsible. It is a carefully considered balance that will allow adoptees and birth parents to get the information they want and will protect their rights should they not want to be contacted.

One woman, an officer of this Legislature—our privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian—was extraordinarily helpful in the development of this bill. The back and forth between our offices has led to a much better proposed bill. I thank her for her interventions, and I thank her for her thoughtfulness. While Ann could not be here in the House today, her assistant commissioner, Ken Anderson, is here. Ken, please take our sincerest thanks back to her when she returns.

We will have the opportunity to discuss, and to enhance if required, the components of this proposed

legislation. I hope all of us in this House will step forward and do our part on behalf of so many people who have waited so long.

I ask this House to support this bill. Thank you.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):

It was my pleasure to speak to a group of Ontario's elected farm leaders and municipal and rural representatives this morning. They came to Queen's Park today at my invitation to hear some excellent news, which I would now like to share with this House: Our government is boosting its support for Ontario's agricultural industry through two separate initiatives that will inject \$129 million into this industry.

Today, I announced the creation of a \$50-million tobacco community transition fund, an initiative that will assist Ontario's tobacco growers who wish to exit the industry and encourage much-needed economic diversification in tobacco-growing communities. We are working in partnership with the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board—I'm pleased that Fred Neukamm, the chair of the board is here today—and the Community Futures Development Corp. to deliver this assistance. Their knowledge of issues ensures that the funds will be used effectively to develop new businesses and new markets and to promote innovation. This approach recognizes the value of local solutions to local situations and will build upon the many strengths of Ontario's tobacco farmers and our communities in those tobacco-growing regions.

The McGuinty government is also taking steps to address the precarious financial situation that our grain and oilseed producers find themselves in through no fault of their own. We will provide the province's full 40% share of the market revenue program benefits to eligible producers for the 2004 crop year. In addition to the \$88 million that we delivered earlier this month, the McGuinty government will provide \$79 million to boost payments in support of Ontario's grain and oilseed sector, bringing the provincial share to \$167 million. These additional funds will be in farmers' hands prior to planting this spring.

We're doing this because we recognize that Ontario's grain and oilseed producers face a particularly difficult marketing year for 2004 crops. But we recognize too that this is a short-term solution and are committed to working with the industry to develop a longer-term approach.

We've witnessed commodity prices fall to some of the lowest levels in years, and we know that farm incomes are depressed right across the country. But we've listened, and we've heard the voice of Ontario's agricultural community telling us that without some immediate assistance, there will be farmers who simply can't afford to plant a crop this spring. This government knows that we can't allow that to come to pass, and in light of the difficult financial situation producers find themselves in through no fault of their own, this gov-

ernment decided to make additional, much-needed funding available to eligible producers.

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This government recognizes the tremendous contribution that the agri-food sector makes to all of our social well-being: more than \$30 billion a year in economic activity, 650,000 jobs and some of the world's safest, finest, high-quality and nutritious foods.

Agriculture, though, does more than just feed us. Ontario farmers are great stewards of our environment. Ontario's farmlands have the potential to provide us with renewable energy, building materials, functional foods and pharmaceuticals.

We are committed to supporting the industry and to working with its elected representatives to ensure that we build a stronger, more sustainable future, not just for our farmers, food processors and rural communities but for every person who wants to make this province the best that it can be.

I've said this before and I'll say it again: There's one thing that each and every one of us can do—and I send this message to the viewing audience and to those who are in the gallery. We need to do what we can to support farmers, and you can do that with a consumer choice when you go into a restaurant, when you go into a grocery store. Buy local. Buy Ontario. Buy Canadian. Ask if it's a Canadian product. That is one way that each and every one of us can, day to day, help our farmers.

The McGuinty government is committed to rural Ontario. It's committed to our farmers. We've demonstrated that today and we'll continue to demonstrate that into the future. We are there to support Ontario farmers.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Minister, I want to thank you for the announcement, on behalf of 25,000 grain and oilseed producers, on behalf of 800 tobacco farmers and on behalf of the agricultural communities.

As you are aware, it has been four full weeks since the March 2 rally here at Queen's Park—four full weeks of no reply for our farmers; four full weeks that they've had to struggle with the thought of not being able to plant their seeds. Our farmers want to plant their seeds, they want to pay their taxes and they want to be part of our economy. When 7,000 distressed farmers drive to Toronto to meet and ask for assistance, it's nice to see our government, finally, returning with some results and some needed money. But it's not what's needed.

Our tobacco farmers were going to receive \$35 million—70% of what they asked for and were promised by you. You and I both know this amount is not enough and does not solve the problems being faced today by our tobacco farmers.

You announced \$79 million for our grain and oilseed producers. This is not the \$300 million you and I both know they need to fund the market revenue program that our farmers have paid for and have a right to expect full payment from. That's not what they're getting. It's very concerning to see, after this long time for money to flow, that they are not going to get paid what is owed to them.

You tell us that you're looking for money from the federal government to help pay it, yet in this House on February 28, you said that market revenue was one of the casualties of your signing the agricultural policy framework, that farmers would not be getting any federal money for the market revenue program.

Obviously, this money will simply help our farmers get the crops in the ground this season. But our farmers are still waiting on programs to help safeguard prices and replace various provincial programs that have been eliminated. Our three biggest crop growers—soybean, corn and wheat—have been practically wiped out by consistently low prices. It's obvious, with all the decisions that you've changed your mind on lately, all the announcements, reannouncements and the like, that you have no understanding of what is happening to our farmers. It's obvious that you have no plan for our farmers. This is a serious concern.

It's nice to see some money trickling down from your ministry, but how about a plan? How about some firm ideas on how to handle the industry? Where is your plan? Where is your plan for our provincial farmers?

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm very pleased to stand in the House today and commend the minister for the tabling of this long-awaited legislation that will open Ontario's adoption disclosure system, giving access to adoptees and to their parents. I also am very pleased to see that we have protection put in the legislation for those who, unfortunately, for whatever reason, determine that they do not wish to have a relationship with their biological parent or their biological children.

As one who has had occasion to speak in this House on at least five occasions, because that's the number of times these private members' bills and others have been before the House, and I've worked closely with the member from Toronto-Danforth in the past—one thing I did say that I want to put back on the record is that the search for our roots and background is recognized as a crucial component to help us discover and affirm our personal identities. An inseparable part of this is the knowledge of one's biological, genetic roots by adoptees who choose to try to discover the hidden side of their earlier lives.

I'm pleased to see this legislation before the House today, but I do wish to indicate that there are some concerns still lingering with this legislation. Obviously, the reference to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and her concerns has been put on the record. There are concerns about access to medical histories; perhaps the government may wish to consider amendments that are tied to the no-contact rule as a condition of providing that.

I note that we'd better look at the impact this legislation will have on children's aid societies in Ontario, who today are struggling with about a \$70-million budget

deficit because your government has capped revenue going to that. Today, the children's aid societies are laying off child protection workers all over the province.

Finally, nothing in today's announcement makes any reference to the resources that will be required in order to put this legislation in effect. Those resources are substantive, and history has shown that when our party had to inject almost \$3 million in 2000 in order to reduce the waiting time for those bills.

Minister, I just want to say that the PC caucus and our new leader, John Tory, will be pleased to work with you in making this the most effective legislation anywhere in the world.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): In response to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I think even the minister will be forced to accept the fact that there is a real crisis for farming in general across the province. Was there anything in today's announcement that would address the needs of beef farmers, the BSE crisis or the closure of the border? Nothing. Was there anything in this announcement to address the problems of the horticulture sector? Nothing.

Then let's address the situation of oilseed and grain farmers, because what there was in this announcement today is too little and too late. There's no plan here; this is simply another band-aid that will last for six months. It's enough money to provide oilseed and grain farmers with a little bit of liquidity—they can go in and pay off their loans from the last couple of years and maybe get a loan for this year—but there is no plan for them. There is no assurance that even six months or nine months from now they will be able to pay their bills. It is a band-aid solution by a government that still doesn't have a plan for Ontario's agricultural sector.

I noted with interest the comments the minister made in his press conference and the comments he made here with respect to tobacco farmers. Here, the minister wants us to believe that the \$50 million for tobacco farmers is to be about the transition out of growing tobacco. But in his press conference earlier, he said that this will enable tobacco farmers in Ontario to compete with cheaper imports. I have to ask the minister, which is it? Is this to help tobacco farmers transition out of growing tobacco and into other crops, or is it to help them continue to grow tobacco and compete against cheaper imports? You can't have it both ways, Minister, and farmers and farm communities need to know which it is. Most of all, they need to see a plan from the McGuinty government for the agricultural sector, not a repetition of five- and six-month band-aid solutions.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm responding to the minister on the adoption disclosure legislation brought forward today. I just have a couple of

minutes today, so I won't go into a lot of detail about the bill before us, and I haven't had a chance to read the whole thing yet, but I have had an opportunity to talk to the minister on several occasions. I want to say to her today that I thank her very much for moving forward. I remember when we met, shortly after the Liberal government took office. There was a steep learning curve in that meeting, as is often the case on this issue. She and her staff listened, and listened to the community—

Interjection.

Ms. Churley: Will you be quiet and listen to me, please—and came forward with a piece of legislation today that closely resembles my bill and the bills that came before this Legislature before, and I'm very happy to see that.

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I'm very happy to see some of my comrades-in-arms here today in the gallery, whom I've worked with for many, many years on this bill, and thank them and congratulate them for their relentless pursuit of every government in this House for a number of years in bringing this legislation forward. I had a brief opportunity to talk with them a little about the bill before us today, and I'm pleased that we will have an opportunity to take this to committee briefly to address some of the concerns that I see so far in the bill.

Some of those involve things like access to non-identifying information. What's going to happen to that, now that I understand the management of searching is going to be removed from the Ministry of Community and Social Services? How will those active searches happen? Are you prepared to license searchers? How is that going to unfold? I understand that the optional counselling, which was part of my bill—it didn't have to be mandatory, but it was there for those who needed it—is not going to be there any more.

There are a few missing pieces of the bill that I'm very pleased I will have the opportunity to address in committee. I do again thank the minister for bringing this forward today and look forward to fixing some of the pieces that need some tweaking to, indeed, make it one of the most progressive, if not the most progressive, pieces of adoption legislation in the world.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent for one member from each of our three parties to say a few words to welcome the new leader of the official opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Premier?

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm just trying to soften him up a bit, Speaker.

I want, on behalf of our government, and indeed our party, to take this opportunity to officially welcome the new member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey to this august chamber.

I think it was Thomas Jefferson who once said, “I have no ambition to govern men. It is a painful and thankless office.” But subsequently, even Thomas Jefferson sang a different tune.

I want to take the opportunity to welcome Mr. Tory. I want to congratulate him on his election. I want to thank him for assuming these responsibilities. I'm not sure it has ever been out of fashion to criticize all things political, whether our political institutions or our systems of government, for those who would hold themselves out to be politicians, people who are dedicated to public service. But it is quite a challenge today to convince people to come forward, to put it all on the line, to knock on doors, to look people in the eye and ask them for their support. I want to thank Mr. Tory for taking on his responsibilities.

I also understand that there may be members of his family present today, and I want to thank them as well, because—and I speak from some considerable experience in this matter—if you are in this, then they are in this too, and you could not do this, sir, without the full support of your family. I thank them for lending their support to you.

I know how challenging, how frustrating, but how important the role of leader of the official opposition is and how much it matters to the tone of our debates and the quality of our decisions. It is a vitally important responsibility. It won't surprise the member that I wish him a fulfilling and very long and distinguished career on that side of the House.

I know as well that the member will discover, as all of us have, how deeply rewarding it is to represent one's constituents and to work on behalf of all Ontarians here in the Legislature.

Il y a bien des carrières qui offrent bien plus d'appréciation et une meilleure rémunération, mais il y a peu d'endroits où vous pouvez faire autant de bien pour autant de personnes que dans cette Assemblée.

I was saying that there are many careers that offer more opportunity for praise or remuneration, but there are very few places where you can do more good for more people than in this House.

So again I say to the member opposite, welcome, thank you, and congratulations. When you put your name on a ballot, you declare your willingness to serve in a very special way. When your fellow Ontarians mark an X beside your name on that ballot, they put their faith in you in a very profound way. I'm sure that you will agree with me, Mr. Tory, and I hope not for the last time, when I say that few things could be more rewarding than the work we will do together in this Legislature on behalf of the good people of Ontario.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to welcome the new member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey. On behalf of New Democrats, I want

to congratulate John Tory on his by-election win. Some might say that at long last, finally, after much delay, you are able to take your seat in the Legislature. Some of us wondered how long this process was going to take.

I want to wish you good fortune as you take on some important responsibilities as a constituency MPP, as leader of the official opposition, and as guardian of the caucus that Mike Harris left you.

I understand that you want to bring a new sense of decorum to the Legislature, and I welcome that. In fact, I believe that would be a very positive development. So I wish you well in that endeavour. I especially wish you well with some of the members of your caucus in that endeavour.

Finally, in the days ahead I look forward to the contributions you will make to democracy and to debate in this Legislature. I especially look forward to finding out where you stand on the issues that matter most to ordinary Ontario families across this province. Welcome, good luck, and I look forward to the debate.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): It is my honour to rise in this House for the first time as the member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey. I want to most sincerely thank the people of my riding for the warmth with which they received me and for the confidence they have placed in me.

I want to begin by thanking the Premier and the leader of the New Democratic Party for the kind words they have spoken today. I noticed that Mr. Hampton was very careful not to get carried away. These are likely the last words of their kind that will be spoken any time in the foreseeable future.

I think these two gentlemen will understand what I'm about to say; namely, that while being chosen to lead one's party is a singular honour, nothing can surpass—and the Premier alluded to this—the honour and the privilege of being elected by the public to serve them.

I want to give a sincere word of thanks as well to Bob Runciman for the effective job he did in holding the government to account as Leader of the Opposition.

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I have not made a lot of promises to the people who elected me, other than to say that my voice will be heard on the issues that matter to them, that I will work hard and be accessible to them, and that I will try my very best to make them proud of me as their representative and to try to restore some degree of faith in the political process. I have some big shoes to fill, following in the likes of Ernie Eves, David Tilson, Jack Johnson and William Davis, all of whom have served all or part of this great, diverse riding with such distinction.

I'm particularly honoured that Premier Davis is here today. He taught me so much about balance and integrity and the real meaning of public service. But beyond all that, I'm honoured that he would be here in this place again today so that we can once again recognize, as was done earlier, the great contributions that he made to the province of Ontario over 25 remarkable years in public life.

I should also say how delighted I am that my friend and fellow Progressive Conservative Ted Rogers is here today. It was an incredible experience, to say the least—I'll perhaps have a chance to elaborate on that some other time; I'm not sure when—to work with him over the years.

The Premier was right when he said that there is nothing more important than the support you have from your family. I'm not sure, even as a veteran campaign adviser, that I fully understood the sacrifices that people make to be in public life, and I'm not referring so much to the people who serve but to the families who support them. My family, especially my mother and father, my siblings and our children have been hugely supportive of my entering public life, and I'm grateful to them beyond what words can express. But my absolute mainstay, my partner in everything that I do, has been Barbara Hackett, my wife of almost 27 years. I'm quite certain that she won more votes in the riding than I did, but a win is a win.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the family dinner table is an amazing place, but when I tried to turn to my family for advice on the first question I should ask the Premier, they quite seriously suggested to me it should be, "Boxers or briefs—which is it?" I accordingly decided to seek alternate advice.

I have travelled, since I became leader, to some 90 ridings in the province. Having knocked on thousands of doors this past winter, one theme came up over and over again, and the Premier made reference to it: People are rapidly losing faith in the system of which we are a part and in the people who make it up, and I include myself in that. Some of them have given up altogether and think that a better way is impossible, but many still hold out hope, fortunately, that there is a better way. I believe there is a better way. It is a way that doesn't rely on everyone holding hands and feeling better about each other—there is room within the better way for honest disagreements on policy, clear disagreements on policy, for firm questions seeking accountability—but it is a way which need not always appear as if it is some kind of contest to produce the last woman or the last man standing. By having our focus on that totally adversarial kind of approach, I think we make this place too much about us, when in fact it should be about them, the people who sent us here to work together, to have honest debate, to get the best out of each other, to share ideas, and, most of all, to get things done for them.

I've watched this place for years. I think the opportunity for individual members of provincial Parliament to make a real difference, regardless of where they sit, is at a low ebb today, and I would like to work with the other parties and with all members to see if we can reverse that. When you think of the challenges we have in the province, whichever ones they are—all the ones that have been discussed today and all the ones that will be discussed going forward—and when you think about the talent that exists in this chamber on all sides of the House to help address those challenges, I think it really is time for us to get all hands on deck.

So I think there is a better way. I think there has to be a better way, and I look forward to working with everyone in this assembly to try to find that better way and to carry out my first and most important duty, of course, which is to represent the people of Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey.

Thank you very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is to the Premier. While I assume we'll have a budget in a few weeks' time, given all the speculation, I wonder if the Premier could tell us his best estimate of the deficit for the current fiscal year as of today.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'm delighted to have the opportunity to bring home to the leader of the official opposition the nature of the challenge we have been burdened with as a result of his government's failing to properly address financial issues in the province of Ontario. The member will know that we have been saddled with a \$5.6-billion deficit. Of concern to me—and the member may desire to make reference to this in a supplementary—is the fact that that party voted against the new Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which will require that we have full transparency with respect to the nature of our financial circumstances before the next election. My concern is that, having voted against that particular piece of legislation, given the opportunity, his party would do the same thing again.

Mr. Tory: I think the people at home must think they're watching the Comedy Channel, if you're giving me a lecture on accountability and transparency. I cannot imagine a situation in which you are the Premier and the president of the executive council of this province, you are the head of the government, you are the boss, and yet you cannot tell us what the deficit of this province is going to be, two days before the end of the fiscal year.

I don't think it is unreasonable for us to ask you for this information. I think people have the right to expect this information from the person at the top, especially when the Toronto Star, for example, referred to some of your government's accounting as "fishy." I think they're understating it at that. Uncertainty and a lack of clarity about this kind of thing are bad for confidence in the province of Ontario.

Let me try again. As the head of the government in this province, can you share with us today your best information as to the current size of the deficit for this year and what your plans are to reduce it going forward? Can you share that information with us?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the member is anxious for us to get our budget out, and we will be putting that out in due course. But I want to remind him that his

party, on the day of the election itself, said that the deficit was zero, that the books were balanced. I can say once again that we have been left one heck of a mess to clean up. We are doing our very best in that particular regard.

We look forward to putting out a budget that will address our financial circumstances in a prudent and responsible way, but that will in addition ensure that we are able to invest, in keeping with Bob Rae's recommendations, in a very important area that will enhance our future prosperity, and that is in our colleges and universities.

So yes, we look forward to putting out our budget; no, we have not entirely cleaned up the deficit left to us by the Tories; and yes, we will continue to manage in a prudent and responsible way.

Mr. Tory: Whatever the situation was—and at least I have been honest enough to talk about what we perhaps should have done—the fact of the matter is that you have hundreds of millions of dollars of new revenues from the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Minister of Community and Social Services, could you come to order, please, and also the other members. I'd like to hear the leader of the official opposition.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Government House Leader, I just asked for order.

Mr. Tory: To the Premier: You have hundreds of millions of dollars of extra revenue from the LCBO, you have billions of dollars from the new health tax that you brought in and other monies, and yet the deficit is higher today than when you stood here and presented the budget your Minister of Finance did last year.

The people are frustrated by a Premier who says one thing and does another. But almost as much as that cause of frustration is the fact that you have no apparent plan to deal with the deficit. All you can do is complain about what you were left or what somebody else did.

You have said that the balanced budget commitment for 2007 is out the window. Your Minister of Finance says that it is just being revisited. Can you tell us right now: What is your best estimate of the deficit for this year, and have you instructed the Minister of Finance to break your promise of balancing the budget by 2007? Do you have any plans? Are you going to carry forward with them? Tell us about them now.

1440

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think Ontarians obviously have a real interest in the performance of the economy and our ability to manage their finances through their government.

I can tell you that we have created three times as many jobs in our first year as the Conservatives did in theirs. I can tell you as well that under the good leadership and the solid initiative of my Minister of Economic Development and Trade, we have landed a \$1-billion investment from Ford Motor Co. of Canada in Ontario and a \$2.5-billion investment from GM. Those speak to the con-

fidence held by the international investment community in our ability to manage finances and in the future growth and prosperity of this province.

Once again, perhaps the single most important comparator here is that in our first year, we have created three times as many jobs as the Tories did in their first year.

Mr. Tory: With a \$6-billion deficit, higher taxes and more regulations, you'll have those job creation figures looked after in no time.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is to the Premier. Premier, the one constant in every survey of public opinion is that health care is the top priority of people in Ontario. I heard as much every day on the doorsteps across my riding from patients trying to find a doctor and from those who are waiting for surgery.

Premier, we are only two days away from the start of the new fiscal year. Your government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. It's very early in the question period. The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, can you come to order. I'm also asking the member for St. Catharines and the House leader to come to order. I'm having difficulty hearing the question coming from the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: We are only two days away from the start of a new fiscal year, and your government has not yet told the hospitals what operating funds they will have to work with for next year. Incredibly, most hospitals learned just last month how much money they were going to get for the fiscal year that is now ending two days from now. This is not really a businesslike approach. It is not any kind of an approach that encourages a sensible plan. Premier, when will you be informing hospitals what their funding will be for the fiscal year that begins this Friday?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I must say I've been looking forward to this opportunity to have this conversation with my friend opposite.

We put close to \$1.7 billion more into hospital operating budgets since we assumed the responsibility and the privilege of government.

The member opposite is saying he will take \$2.4 billion out of Ontario's health care expenditures. I think he owes it to the people of Ontario to tell them exactly where that money is going to come from. If he were to close 10 large hospitals, all that would do is cut the cost by \$1 billion. He still has \$1.4 billion more in cuts he intends to make. I think he owes it to the people of Ontario to tell them exactly where he's going to get the \$2.4 billion he intends to cut from health care.

Mr. Tory: On your door it says you're the Premier of Ontario. You're here to answer the questions, and I want

to ask you this—the hospitals will end this fiscal year on Friday, only two days from now, \$330 million in deficit.

I want to quote from a speech given to the Kitchener-Waterloo chamber of commerce by the president of the Ontario Hospital Association last Wednesday. She said, "First, hospitals guess what funding they will receive for the year from the ministry. Then, somewhere near the end of the fiscal year, they find out—after they've been spending for months—exactly what their funding actually is. Caught in this absurd situation, most hospitals turn to banks to cover the difference—paying their interest using taxpayer dollars—and increasing the cost of health care even more."

Premier, this mismanagement isn't acceptable—not to taxpayers or to patients. Specifically, how will your government address these carry-over deficits, and what is your plan to resolve this situation? Specifically, what is your plan?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I can say that we are working well with representatives of Ontario hospitals—

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Meeting with them today.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: —and we will be meeting with them once again today.

I think it would be interesting to compare and contrast what the then head of the Ontario Hospital Association said about the Tory government's approach to hospitals and what the now president of the Ontario Hospital Association says about our approach.

David McKinnon said, "Everyone can see that there is no game plan...."

"Hospital people are ... concerned, because government is making decisions that are not evidence-based and not consumer-focused."

That's what David McKinnon, then president of the OHA, said about the Tory hospital policies.

Here is what Hilary Short, now the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, said about our hospital policies: "So, what does this ambitious and far-reaching agenda mean for hospitals? Lest anyone think differently, I want to be perfectly clear. Ontario hospitals support this transformation agenda. Full stop."

Mr. Tory: That very same president of the Ontario Hospital Association referred to the situation you've now placed the hospitals in as "absurd" just last week. Your answer is just not good enough.

Hospitals cannot make plans for the forthcoming year that begins on Friday if they don't know what they're getting from you. They can't possibly plan in a businesslike way. You seem to think that the more you spend, the better it is, as opposed to looking for ways that you, the hospitals and everybody else in the health care system can do things better. You found the money to fire the nurses. You found the money for a casino expansion. You even found money last week to partially reverse your privatization of physiotherapy. When are the hospitals of Ontario going to get a clear message from you with respect to their funding for the fiscal year that begins in two days and the deficit mess that you've

allowed to go on all year? When are they going to get some answers?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, we've just heard from representatives of the Ontario Hospital Association. Like I say, I think this is the fundamental difference when it comes to funding: We've put in \$1.7 billion more so far; my friend opposite wants to take \$2.4 billion out of health care. We are investing more in health care, working with our hospitals. More than half of Ontario hospitals now have their budgets in balance. We will continue to work with those outstanding through to 2006 to ensure that they can all balance their budgets. I think the important point of contrast here for the people of Ontario is, we have put \$1.7 billion more into hospital budgets thus far; Mr. Tory wants to take \$2.4 billion out of Ontario health care.

HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Over the break, Ontario's Auditor General caught you trying to fudge the books using Enron-style accounting tricks in your budget. Ordinary Ontario families want to see real improvements in the funding of education, real improvements in the funding of health care, not accounting tricks. Premier, now that your Enron-style accounting has been exposed, what is your plan to properly fund health care and education in the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It seems that virtually every third or fourth word out of the NDP leader's mouth has to do with Enron, or he keeps picking on Louisiana. I'm not sure what he's got against the good people of the state of Louisiana.

We're pleased to work with the Provincial Auditor and present the accounts in a way that he tells us is most transparent. But it's no secret that we have some real and pressing financial challenges. We continue to maintain that our most important priorities are health care, education and prosperity for Ontarians.

We have invested significantly more—and the member opposite knows—in education. I can speak for a moment with respect to that. We have hired an additional 1,100 teachers, we have smaller classes in over 1,300 schools and for the first time in a long time—and I think this is most important when it comes to education—test results are beginning to go up. So we are investing more and we're getting results for those investments.

Mr. Hampton: The Enron accounting trick cannot be denied; the Auditor General was very clear about that.

But I ask the Premier, what is the plan for funding health care? What is the plan for funding education? I want to point out a few examples: those parents who happen to have some of the most vulnerable children in the province, parents who are worried about health care for their children. All five children's hospitals in the province are facing severe shortages because of your

short-sighted approach to health care funding. Last month, because the intensive care beds at the Hospital for Sick Children weren't all available, they were forced to cancel surgeries for 11 youngsters. In the past two months, McMaster hospital in Hamilton has been forced to turn away 30 seriously ill children.

Premier, sick children are becoming sicker under your watch. Avoid the accounting tricks. What's your plan to properly fund health care in this province so that more sick children don't face this situation?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I say to the member opposite that we have invested significantly more money in hospitals, enhancing their operating budgets. We have, for example, enabled hospitals to hire significantly more nurses. In fact, we've provided funding for close to 3,000 more nurses in the province.

The Minister of Health tells me that we have experienced some unusual, extreme pressures when it comes to the ICUs in pediatric departments in our hospitals. We're working with our hospitals to help resolve and deal with those issues. But not all stories connected with health care in Ontario are bad, and I know that my friend would not want to misrepresent that.

Just one small example: Today at McMaster University, at the Hamilton Health Sciences centre, triplets were born. My understanding is that all the extremely rare triplets are doing well at the Mac neonatal unit. I take the opportunity to offer my congratulations to the parents and family and to all those involved in ensuring that that delivery was successful. There are many positive stories affecting many of our families, day in and day out, when it comes to their experience in Ontario health care.

Mr. Hampton: Once again, the Premier talks about a plan to hire 3,000 additional new nurses. Premier, your government was issuing layoffs to nearly a thousand nurses just a month and a half ago. A repetition of promises made but not kept is not a plan.

Here's the reality: Almost a quarter of the 65 pediatric intensive-care beds in Toronto, London, Ottawa, Kingston and Hamilton are not able to provide service. Why? Because there aren't enough nurses to cover those pediatric intensive-care beds. You've known about this problem since you became the government, but the problem is becoming worse.

I ask you again, Premier: Don't repeat old promises that you've already failed to deliver on. What is your plan to improve the funding of health care so that children like this, very sick children, aren't turned away from hospitals?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: As a point of relevant information, we're spending \$3 billion more on health care.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): This year.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: That's this year. That's a very significant new investment in health care across the province. I know the member opposite is not suggesting, nor would the new leader of the official opposition, that the

only thing we can and should do to improve the quality of the health care we deliver to Ontarians is spend more money.

We are working with our hospitals. We have enabled them to hire more nurses. We have, as well, invested significantly in new MRIs and new CTs. We are now working with those who run our pediatric ICU departments to ensure that they are able to provide the quality of care to which all our children are entitled.

We're proud of the fact that we've invested \$1.7 billion in our new hospital budget. We're proud that we're spending over three billion new dollars on health care. But there's some work to be done, together with all of those involved in the delivery of health care, and we'll continue to do that work on the ground.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, you continue to repeat old announcements. The reality out there for sick children is that they are being turned away. The reality for nurses is that they're not being hired; they're being laid off.

Let me give you another example. The parents of the poorest children expect you to honour commitments you made to them. These are the parents who have to rely upon the national child benefit supplement in order to put food on the table for their children and clothes on their backs. Before the election you said, "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement." You said, "The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." But the clawback hasn't ended. As a result, 91,000 families, some of the poorest families in Ontario, are having trouble paying the rent, having trouble putting food on the table, having trouble putting clothing on their children's backs.

Premier, that was the promise you made. Don't tell us about more accounting tricks. Don't tell us about a repetition of those promises. What's your plan to end the clawback?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services will have more to say in a moment, but let me tell you a little bit about our record and what we've done with respect to helping those in lower income groups in Ontario. We've spent \$70 million for 3,400 new housing units. We've increased the minimum wage twice, on the way to \$8 per hour in 2007. We've established a new rent bank and put \$10 million in that. We have established a new 3% increase in disability and social assistance payments; that's the first time in 11 years. We've invested \$2 million to enhance homelessness prevention programs, and there are many other items as well.

The fact of the matter is that the member opposite does not have a monopoly on social consciousness. We are working hard and well to ensure that those who find

themselves in positions of disadvantage get a helping hand from this government.

Mr. Hampton: Once again, the Premier repeats promises previously made and promises that haven't been kept. I asked him, what's the plan to stop the clawback, the clawback of money from the poorest families in this province?

This is what it means: It means \$1,500 a year for a child in a poor family; it means \$1,300 a year for the second child in a poor family. That is money to pay the rent; that is money to buy clothes; that is money to put food on the table. And it's your promise. You were the one who said, "The clawback is wrong. We will end it."

Don't give the people of Ontario more accounting tricks. My question, again, is, what's the McGuinty government plan to end the clawback of money from the poorest children, the poorest families in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I think it's important for us to note that the moment this government formed a government, we stopped the policy of continuing the clawback for the national child benefit. That is very important, because the federal government increases that amount every year, with the largest increases yet to come. This year alone that meant an additional \$7 million that was not clawed back to families who are on social assistance.

This is a very important point. We have been very upfront about our significant fiscal situation. The NDP wouldn't appreciate the fact that it is very tough to find the money, considering what the last government left us. It is very hard to implement all of our promises all at once, because we simply don't have the money. So yes, we are working on it—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Member from Nickel Belt—

Hon. Ms. Papatello: —but we've taken the first steps in the right direction; absolutely, we have. I am proud of the record of the Liberal government, because it has been a year and a half, and we can make a difference.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm just waiting for the member from Nickel Belt to come to order, so you can put your question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hampton: Mr. Speaker, I often get a lot of advice on asking my questions.

I simply want to say to the Premier, remember this? This was your election document: Affordable, Responsible Change. In it, you promised that you were going to end the clawback. When you made this promise, we knew there was a deficit; your now Chair of Management Board knew there was a sizable deficit; your now Minister of Community Safety knew there was a sizable

deficit. They all knew there was a deficit, yet you said you had a plan to end the clawback.

Your government is taking a quarter of a billion dollars out of the pockets of the poorest families, the poorest children in this province. They've seen your accounting tricks; they've seen how quickly the McGuinty government comes up with a \$3.9-billion accounting trick. What they want to know is, where is the McGuinty government's plan to stop taking a quarter of a billion dollars away from these, the poorest children, the poorest families in this province?

1500

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I can't explain why, but the former government decided, upon first receiving the national child benefit, to claw it back. They were one of eight provinces to do so across the country. Most of Canada did it; I realize that. We think it shouldn't have been done. We believe we have to begin to reverse that. So we as a government did start reversing that.

What that money is currently doing: \$170 million is going out to everyday families for child care tax credits, and \$41 million is currently being invested in children's programs for children at risk. We are talking about the same kids in Ontario.

So let me be clear: We know the child care tax credit is important to many families, and they long to keep that. We know that \$41 million—we get letters from municipalities saying, "Don't stop that money, because our programs are survival for children."

We do have tough decisions ahead. We have already reversed the decision and stopped future clawbacks. We have a strong record of helping children, and we will continue on that record as long as we're the government.

GREENBELT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, there have been many questions raised about the boundaries of your greenbelt and the basis on which they were drawn. Legitimate, serious questions remain unanswered about the judgment you showed in meeting with developers who had an interest in the greenbelt while the final boundaries were being drawn. We know that you met with at least one such developer as recently as November 9. Coincidentally, that same developer had a valuable block of land removed from the greenbelt.

Premier, your Minister of Municipal Affairs has publicly stated that he felt it was inappropriate to meet with developers during this period. Why was it OK for you to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's no secret that there are some developers who are very, very unhappy with the fact that we've created, in perpetuity, protected space of some 1.8 million acres. Some people have lost significant amounts of money. I guess, in a sense, we put the uncertainty back into speculation. Some people will not be in a position to profit from development. But we just think it's more

important, and in the greater public interest, that we preserve that land in perpetuity. We're very proud of the decision we have made. We think it's in keeping with our responsibility to families throughout the province, but particularly those in this community, who stand to benefit from it.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member from Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): After four weeks, still no answer from the Premier on some very basic questions surrounding the special exemption to the well-connected developer in the area of Vaughan.

Premier, let's review the facts. On October 28, your draft greenbelt map excluded Mr. DeGasperis's property in Vaughan. On November 9, you met with Mr. DeGasperis, whom you will recall from your close encounter at the \$10,000-per-person fundraiser earlier that year. When your final greenbelt map was released, Mr. DeGasperis's land mysteriously received an exemption, resulting in about a \$15-million windfall.

Premier, please answer these questions directly. It has been four weeks. Will you reveal the science behind this particular decision? Will you send it to a legislative committee so that we can do so if you will not?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think we should be very direct about this. The member opposite is not in the least bit interested in the science; what he's interested in doing is smearing the greenbelt. This is a wonderful initiative that serves to the benefit of the people of Ontario. It is good for our society; it is good for our economy; it is good for our health; it is good for our ability to generate wealth. All of that is connected with the greenbelt that we have established, the greater Toronto area greenbelt that we have put in place.

With respect to the science, he himself knows—and I've already listed these documents but perhaps I should do so again: The Natural Heritage Reference Manual was one of our sources of information; the LEAR report, the land evaluation and area review; A Current Assessment of Gross Land Supply in the Greater Golden Horseshoe; the Growth Outlook for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; The Application of a Land Use Intensification Target for the Greater Golden Horseshoe; and Toward a Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt, the Greenbelt Task Force report.

There are several documents which were used by us as the basis for our decision on this matter, but the truth of the matter is the member does not, as a matter of principle, support the preservation of land in perpetuity for Ontario families. That's the difference.

LABOUR UNIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Card-based certification is hardly a radical proposal. It existed for decades in Ontario under NDP, Liberal and Conservative governments. It even predates Bill Davis and his government, going back to the days of Leslie Frost. You're prepared to restore it in Bill 144 to building trades workers, but

you deny it to all other workers in this province. Many of these workers, mostly women, mostly new Canadians, who are working in places like Wal-Mart, are paid some of the lowest wages in Ontario. Why won't you extend card-based certification to all workers in Ontario, Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'll be pleased later this afternoon to kick off second reading debate with respect to Bill 144. It's a very important and progressive initiative that will assist all workers in Ontario because it will provide the ability for all workers to exercise their choice as to whether they wish or do not wish to be members of a union.

Applicable to all workers, we are restoring the remedial certification power that had existed in Ontario for decades, even for a couple of years under the previous Tory regime until it was eliminated by that regime. This certification power will ensure that when there is employer misconduct or union misconduct and workers are effectively deprived of the right to choose, the employer can be subject to certification of the bargaining unit. In other words, if there is a right, it must have an effective remedy.

We are also restoring, for the benefit of all workers, the interim reinstatement power, which again will ensure—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I will have those spectators removed from the gallery, please.

Member for Niagara Centre, supplementary?.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker.

Minister, people across Ontario are denouncing your legislation as not only inadequate but discriminatory, sexist and—you heard it—racist. Workers who are mostly women, mostly new Canadians, mostly people of colour, mostly people of visible minorities, desperately underpaid workers, deserve the same rights of card-based certification that you're prepared to give building trades workers.

Minister, will you please commit today to ensuring that upon completion of second reading, Bill 144 is reviewed by the appropriate committee and is reviewed across the province so that workers can provide input in places like Windsor, Hamilton, Niagara, Oshawa, Thunder Bay, Kenora, Rainy River and Sudbury? Will you commit to public hearings on Bill 144?

1510

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, this government's record with respect to labour legislation is a very strong one for protecting the rights of all workers, including women, minorities and those in vulnerable positions—already two increases to the minimum wage, which had not been increased for the previous nine years. We brought in legislation ending the 60-hour workweek and ensuring that employment standards legislation was actually enforced—more prosecutions initiated in the last 10 months than in the previous 10 years.

We brought in the legislation for family medical leave, which will assist all caregivers. One would have thought

that that legislation, which assists caregivers—and we know women tend to be greater caregivers than men—would have been supported unanimously by all parties in the House, but when the time came, the NDP opposed passage of that legislation. Why? What great principle was at stake here? It was postage.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Over the past couple of months, many of our rural constituents have been telling us about the crisis in agriculture. I have received many calls from the farmers in my riding, and I've met with countless others. They were expressing their concerns about their financial hardships and a future of uncertainty.

The grains and oilseeds sector is experiencing 25-year lows, and planting season is just around the corner. I was very pleased to hear that our government will be providing 2004 market revenue benefits. This will come as a relief to those struggling grains and oilseeds farmers in my riding. Minister, would you let the constituents know what this means for them?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The McGuinty government is committed to ensuring that we have a healthy and prosperous agricultural sector. We recognize as well the significant challenges that our grains and oilseeds farmers are facing because of a rising dollar, increased subsidies by the European Union and the United States and increased production in Brazil and Argentina. Those subsidies are actually distorting markets and supporting overproduction.

That's why we announced today, in addition to the \$88 million that we flowed previously, an additional \$79 million in support of Ontario's grains and oilseeds sector, an announcement that has just been hailed by the grains and oilseeds sector as a critical first step in moving forward.

We are encouraging the federal government to come to the table with its 60% share of support for the market revenue program.

But, as well, we recognize that this is just dealing with the short term. We need a long-term solution. That's why we've undertaken and made the commitment to have a comprehensive review of our business management programming, to ensure that our programs meet the needs of Ontario farmers. We're committed to that. We're working with agricultural leaders to make sure we move forward to position agriculture.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Today, our announcement proves that our government is listening and actually acting on those concerns that many of our local constituents have been bringing forward, including to me. My constituents in the tobacco-growing community have brought me their concerns and have expressed their need for assistance as they are preparing to either exit the industry or downsize. Not only is there an impact on

farmers themselves, but there's a concern in many communities where the tobacco industry is driving the community. Minister, how will the announcement today help deal with the various issues of the tobacco industry, as well as the tobacco communities within my riding?

Hon. Mr. Peters: By this year, 2005, Ontario will be producing 100% of all the tobacco grown in Canada. We recognize, though, as we move forward with our smoke-free Ontario initiative, that there is a need to provide assistance. We have approximately 750 growers in this province, and as the use of tobacco declines, there is an obligation on us to assist in helping to ensure there is an orderly and smooth transition. We've recognized that on two fronts: first, by committing \$35 million to be administered through the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board to assist tobacco growers in making that transition from tobacco to alternate crops. As well, we do recognize the economic impact that tobacco has on five counties in southwestern Ontario. Hence, we've come forward with \$15 million that will be administered through the Community Futures Development Corp. to ensure that we provide assistance for economic diversification in those communities, so that we continue to ensure a healthy and prosperous rural Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You're fond of talking about your fiscal plan. In the budget a year ago, you talked about your comprehensive four-year plan for a balanced budget in the province of Ontario. In your economic statement in this place just one year ago, in a six-page statement, on every page, 1 through 6, you talked about your comprehensive plan for a balanced budget in the province of Ontario.

Now we have the Premier a week or 10 days ago saying, "Oh no, no more balanced-budget plan in the province of Ontario." In your economic statement in this place just six months ago, you said, "Six months later, we remain on track." When did your comprehensive fiscal plan for the province of Ontario leave the tracks?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm delighted to hear, finally, from my friend from Whitby-Ajax. I can tell him simply that we're still on track. In fact, the province has had, and continues to have, a relatively good year.

If my friend would reread the budget we presented almost a year ago in this Legislature, he will see that we laid out a period of very disciplined spending over the course of the next three years. And if my friend from Whitby-Ajax does us the courtesy of attending when we present the budget in a few weeks' time, he will see that we are making determined, resolute progress to eliminate the horrible financial mess that he helped create while he was a Minister of Finance in the previous government.

Mr. Flaherty: I was wondering whether the Minister of Finance was going to blame the federal government or the previous government. Why don't you look at your-

self? You've been the government in the province of Ontario for almost 18 months. You've come before this House twice now to talk about your comprehensive fiscal plan, taking into account the federal government situation, taking into account what went on before you became the government.

You're the government now. You're the Minister of Finance. You said you'd balance the budget. You said just six months ago that you had—what was it, in your economic statement on page 6, Minister? I'm sure you'll remember saying it. You say you're successful. You say, "Our success thus far only serves to reinforce our resolve to stick to our plan." If you're going stick to your plan, stand up in this House now and say that you'll balance the budget within your term in government.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I know there's a wide gulf between the economic policies of the Leader of the Opposition, who has just taken his seat here, and the former Minister of Finance. I think that before these questions get put, the two of them ought to have a discussion. In fact, it was only a few days ago that the Leader of the Opposition said on Focus Ontario, "It's okay if we take three or four years to eliminate the deficit." I want to tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax that we set out a plan in our budget, we're committed to that plan and we are going to eliminate the horrible financial mess that you and others left us as a result of eight and a half years of very bad financial administration.

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. You keep saying that you'll be there for students, but you are leaving them twisting in the wind. They've heard your Premier say that tuition fees were just too high, but they also recently heard him say, "The price of tuition will go up. The only issue is the pace at which it goes up."

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance reminds us that students carry 44% of the burden of the cost of post-secondary education. It has doubled in the last decade.

Minister, don't you think you should be talking about lowering tuition fees, as opposed to increasing them?

1520

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to answer this question. I'm really glad that you met with the students today, because I'm sure you learned a lot that you obviously didn't know before. Let me tell you that your government of the day and the Tory government of the day featured very strongly in Bob Rae's report. He kept talking about the damage you did to post-secondary education in Ontario.

Our students know that our government is interested in their well-being and interested in investing in prosperity through investments in post-secondary education. Our students know that we, not you, are their friends.

Mr. Marchese: Minister, I hope you read the report, because it said a lot more than what you're saying.

I want to read a quote from an MPP who implored the government of the time not to raise tuition fees: "I'm asking government members ... to understand the real consequences of jacking up those fees and putting them through the roof; to understand what it means to the hopes and dreams of our young people.... The more we can keep post-secondary education affordable and accessible, the brighter the future we are going to have in Ontario." I didn't say that. It was Dalton McGuinty who said that.

Applause.

Mr. Marchese: I'm so happy you're all clapping for him, because I've got to tell you that his remarks reflect accurately what students feel, what parents feel and what I feel.

Minister, are you going to make the investment to bring tuition fees down and fulfill McGuinty's dream, so that our young people can have an affordable and accessible post-secondary education? Will you do that?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'm very proud to be the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities in the first government in Ontario to freeze tuition fees for two years. The member across the floor is right: It is our Premier's promise, Premier McGuinty's promise.

Let me also remind the member across the floor that his government promised to freeze tuition, but instead they raised tuition 50%. Thank you for the question.

EQUESTRIAN FACILITIES

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): My question is to the Minister of Finance. A number of my constituents are owners of equestrian facilities, and they've expressed to me their very serious concern about rising tax bills as a result of recent changes to the property assessment system and tax classification of a number of these facilities from either farm or residential to commercial. Many of these facilities are small operations that may very well be put out of business if they're required to pay the much higher commercial rate. What is our government doing to address the concerns of equestrian property owners?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I very much appreciate the question from my friend from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, because there are so many equestrian facilities in that part of the province.

This is one of the times when things really, really worked out well. When I heard of this problem, I got in touch with MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., and asked them to revisit their assessment criteria for these sorts of riding schools and equestrian facilities. They did their work very quickly. They've reported back to me, and I've approved their report. They will indeed be putting these new assessment criteria in place, and the result of that will be a much fairer and much more equitable property assessment for these businesses, some of which operate on very thin margins.

Mr. Arthurs: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure that many of my constituents will be very pleased to hear the actions of our government to address this particular concern.

My riding is made up of many agricultural properties as well, and they conduct a variety of agriculture-related activities. Minister, what is our government doing to address the agricultural property owners in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Again, the steps that we took for the equestrian facilities solved a significant and emerging problem right across the province. More generally, what we've done for the farm base is to make sure that MPAC is using appropriate criteria in assessing farms. Of course, one of the things that we announced in the last budget is we postponed the assessment cycle so that not only farm owners but property owners right across the province would have as much as six more months to evaluate the criteria for the assessment and, if necessary, to appeal to MPAC or to appeal directly to the Assessment Review Board.

So, thus far, I think we've made some really significant progress, and I think it's felt most significantly in the farming communities.

EDUCATION

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question was to the Minister of Education, but I see that he's not here. I'll ask the Premier in the minister's absence. Premier, just a few weeks ago, when asked about the strike votes that were taking place across the province, the Minister of Education was asked whether he was concerned about the implication to the classrooms. At that time, the minister made this statement, and I think you'll recall it: "That's little more than a negotiating tactic," and parents and students shouldn't be worried. Your Minister of Education continues to talk about peace and stability in the classroom.

Premier, I would ask you or the minister, if he comes to the House, could you inform the House of the following: How many school boards are now in an official strike position; how many teachers are under work-to-rule orders; and what services are being withheld from classrooms and schools across the province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Speaker, I'm in your hands. I'm prepared to answer this question, but I've just been informed that the minister is on his way back. If the member wants to stand it down, I leave it to you.

Mr. Klees: I would ask the Premier to respond.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I would be pleased to do so. I think one of the things we've got to look at in this regard is our record thus far. We've had, I would argue, a very good record when it comes to bringing an atmosphere of peace and stability to our system of publicly funded education. It is true that we're going to have some significant differences from time to time, in particular between school boards and teachers with respect to salaries and other benefits. But we are confident that

given the atmosphere that we have worked so hard to introduce into our public system of education, we will be able to resolve those differences.

Mr. Klees: Either the Premier doesn't know the answer or he's too embarrassed to admit it. The fact is that today more than 46,000 teachers in 30 school boards across the province are engaged in a legal strike.

Minister, here's the elementary teachers' federation's Provincial Takeover Bulletin number 12. It reads as follows: "We are engaged in a legal strike. This is not business as usual."

It goes on to instruct teachers that they:

"Will not attend staff meetings....

"Will not perform any custodial, secretarial or administrative functions....

"Will not schedule any new field trips....

"Will not perform the duties of computer site administrator....

"Will not perform the duties of a division chairperson....

"Will not distribute board print material...."

If this is business as usual—to the Minister of Education, who has returned to his desk—and if in fact you continue to pronounce peace and stability in classrooms across this province, I want to know from the minister if this bulletin reflects the kind of peace and stability that this minister endorses in classrooms across the province.

1530

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I think that parents and, frankly, students across the province can be grateful it's not business as usual, at least as typified by his government, which had 25 million days lost to strikes and lockouts—education denied to students around this province. There is an unfortunate hangover from the previous era, but what I really want to report is, it only takes the form of language of some of the things that are being talked about; there is no direct impact on students.

What I would say to you is that what people need to be aware of is that teachers, school boards and the ministry are working together to try and create a resolution that will last for some time. So, 25 million days lost under that approach, attacking people, not creating the environment for learning, not taking responsibility: That era is over, and very shortly we'll have positive developments to have that reflected in every single classroom across this province. Even as we speak right now, students are getting their education and they leave with a better future, knowing that an era has changed and we've left those 25 million lost days far, far behind.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. Today, Hamilton city council once again resumes its budget deliberations. One of the big problems that I'm sure you're aware of is that my city faces the fact that we are not getting social services funding adequate enough to meet the needs of the social

services budget in Hamilton, to the tune of about \$19.5 million. The mayor and council put Hamilton's budget on hold for one full month to give you the opportunity to come forward with the strategies that you had promised for helping Hamilton afford the social services it provides on your behalf. You said you'd fix the Conservative funding formula that put cities like Hamilton behind the eight ball.

Premier, when Toronto asked, you helped. Hamilton's poverty rate is equal to that of Toronto, but instead of helping Hamilton, you've turned your back, and your Liberal backbenchers are, in fact, silent on this matter. Are you prepared to saddle Hamilton residents with higher property taxes and make them pay for your broken promise, or what steps will you take to help Hamilton pay your \$19.5-million-in-social-service-delivery bill?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I would simply say to my friend from Hamilton East that I had an opportunity to meet with the mayor recently. He made a very solid case for the people of the city of Hamilton. He's doing a great job in dealing with some difficult circumstances. In fact, last year, we provided some special one-time funding for the city of Hamilton.

I don't want to speculate on what might or may not be coming up in my own budget, but I'll simply tell my friend that we are in ongoing discussions with the mayor. We're very optimistic about the way in which he is managing his own budget. We will soon be announcing a successor to the community reinvestment fund. I think perhaps, with a more equitable fund, the kinds of problems that my friend from Hamilton East has been talking about will be resolved, at least in part. I just want to tell her that she need not be as concerned as her question seemed to imply.

Ms. Horwath: I'm a little bit concerned because so far you don't seem to be much better than your federal cousins when it comes to negotiating a fair deal for Hamilton. It's outrageous that at this point you're still backing off from your commitment to Hamilton and other cities.

Hamilton plays by the rules. It delivers social services programs in good faith. It believes in the promises that were made, that the downloading would be neutral. Of course, as we know, downloading in Hamilton was not revenue-neutral. Our city has great needs. More than 95,000 people there, 25% of the population, are living below the poverty line. You refuse to pay, and you reject the social services pooling that we've suggested as a city that we need. By tying council's hands at this point, you're going to force them into a situation of double-digit property tax increases, and that's just not acceptable. It's a far cry from your election promise of giving cities the tools that they need, and if you don't have a plan for Hamilton yet, when exactly are you going to have it?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I simply say to my friend from Hamilton East that she obviously did not listen to my first answer, and that is, we are working on a plan. I'll provide her with the details in due course.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): I have a petition submitted to me by the Reverend Canon Derwyn Shea of St. Hilda's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Liberal government of Ontario has indicated its intention to delist physiotherapy services for most seniors; and

"Whereas most residents living in our assisted residential care facility rely upon physiotherapy services for quality of life; and

"Whereas most residents of our assisted residential care facility survive on very modest monthly income and many require subsidized accommodation and cannot afford to privately pay for physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the delisting of physiotherapy services for seniors will result in increased strain on Ontario's health care system and budget and will contribute to deteriorating health conditions and quality of life for seniors and will be viewed as breaking a promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

"Whereas the care and support of the most vulnerable in our society is surely a social contract of the highest priority for any government with vision and integrity; and

"Whereas it appears to be the intention of the current government of Ontario to turn its back on the needs of our aging citizens in the delisting of physiotherapy services;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario not delist physiotherapy services for the Ontario health insurance plan and that funding for such services not be reduced."

Congratulations to these outstanding seniors, who have got this bully minister to back down.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Just get it a little bit quieter so we can hear the petitions.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reads:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental

disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I agree with this, and I'm putting my name on it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly to protect anaphylactic students.

"Whereas there are no established Ontario-wide standards to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Ontario Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all Ontario schools;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support the swift passage of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, that requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I put my name on this petition with pleasure and hand it over to Alex, our page.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend

specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I am pleased to sign my name to that.

1540

HIGHWAY 17

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the past government of Ontario, under the Minister of Transportation, Al Palladini, transferred the responsibility of Highway 17 to the municipalities;

"Whereas the municipalities do not have sufficient funds for the maintaining and rehabilitating of this highway or the bridges, without mentioning its widening;

"Whereas in 2001, the administration of the united counties of Prescott and Russell estimated the circulation of 21,000 vehicles per day during the week as you enter the city limits of Clarence-Rockland ... and has since reached 25,000;

"Whereas this main road transferred to the municipalities is no less than the Trans-Canada Highway, in a despicable state, and continues to deteriorate while traffic is steadily increasing;

"Whereas the eastern Ontario population demands the same road security services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation hereby take back the responsibility of Highway 17/174 and proceed immediately to its widening from the city of Clarence-Rockland to the city of Ottawa."

It's signed by 2,932 petitioners in the municipality of Clarence-Rockland.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by people from Dunnville, Grimsby, Stoney Creek and Jordan, to name a few of the communities. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty Liberals promised a health care system that gives us all the care we need when we need it; and

"Whereas chiropractors, optometrists and physiotherapists provide the necessary health care to the people of Ontario to maintain healthy and active lifestyles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their promise to invest in health care and restore funding to cover optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care under OHIP."

And in support, my signature.

ÉLEVAGE INTENSIF

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition provenant de Citoyens pour l'environnement et l'avenir de l'Est ontarien, et contenant plus de 2 000 signatures.

« Pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Étant donné que les exploitations d'élevage intensif de porcs sont incompatibles avec la préservation de l'agriculture familiale conventionnelle et avec la protection de nos communautés rurales et d'une qualité de vie durable pour tous les résidents ruraux;

« Étant donné que la Loi sur la gestion des éléments nutritifs adoptée en Ontario n'aborde pas les conséquences environnementales, sanitaires et sociales liées aux exploitations d'élevage intensif;

« Étant donné que le gouvernement du Québec a prolongé son moratoire contre toute nouvelle porcherie et toute expansion de porcherie existante...;

« Étant donné que l'Association médicale canadienne a exhorté le gouvernement fédéral et les gouvernements provinciaux/territoriaux à décréter des moratoires contre l'expansion de l'industrie porcine, et ce jusqu'à ce que des études scientifiques fiables puissent démontrer si cette industrie n'a pas d'impacts néfastes pour la santé humaine;

« Nous, soussigné(e)s, demandons au gouvernement de M. Dalton McGuinty de décréter immédiatement un moratoire contre la construction ou l'expansion de toute exploitation d'élevage de porcs. Nous demandons qu'un examen général d'ordre scientifique et médical soit effectué pour déterminer si les exploitations d'élevage intensif de porcs sont susceptibles d'affecter la santé et la sécurité des communautés qui vivent à proximité, ou de détériorer l'eau potable et l'environnement. L'examen scientifique et médical devrait être suivi d'une ronde de consultations publiques sur les résultats obtenus, pour déterminer les meilleurs moyens de soutenir des communautés rurales viables et saines. »

J'y ajoute ma signature avec plaisir.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

It is signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I support this as well.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): This is a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This petition has been submitted to me by the Richmond Village Association. It reads as follows:

"Whereas it has been clearly pointed out to you that in choosing a force main through Richmond's water supply rather than on-site treatment of Munster sewage you have violated a fundamental principle of risk management as well as the precautionary principle applied in matters of public health. You have been made aware that there is a legal opinion that the class environmental assessment addendum for addressing Munster's waste water treatment was illegal in that it was not conducted in accordance with Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act;

"We, the undersigned, ask that the environmental assessment be reopened and see that it be conducted in a legal and principled manner."

I've added my own signature to this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas funding has only been increased to provide better long-term care for people in long-term-care facilities ... but not to any self-directed programs that help seniors live in their own homes (because they either choose to live at home or because they are not suited to live in LTCFs); and

"Whereas the current policy continues to use the community care access centre ... model to look after all long-term care in this province; and

"Whereas"—it continues on quite a bit here and I know you're going to cut me off, Mr. Speaker. The final "whereas" is:

"Whereas our seniors need stability in home care-givers and not a different one each day, as is the practice found in the current CCAC private agency model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government consider amalgamating the five separate CCACs in Toronto and create one CCAC that will indeed follow its own motto of 'Helping People Live at Home' and, if necessary, create a new self-directed LTC model, perhaps like the one instituted in Germany in 1994 and adopted by other European countries, to allow seniors, our parents and grandparents, to live at home if they choose. This model has proven to be more caring because it is family-based, while eliminating the frustration of bureaucracy and the wasteful and inefficient management of health care funds. Our seniors and the disabled would get what they always wanted: the choice to stay at home."

That was presented to me by one of my constituents, and I present it to the Legislature today.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham; for instance, August Giesberger and Ross McMaster, just to name two.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis due to lost property rights and a crushing regulatory burden, and they will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park"—as they have—"on March 9;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider the issue of municipal jurisdiction brought forward by the Rural Revolution's resolutions to respect property rights and prosperity as follows:

"Resolution number 5: Municipal governments shall be constituted to take control and jurisdiction over matters that pertain to their constituents.

"Resolution number 9: All municipalities forced or coerced into amalgamations shall hold a binding referendum on de-amalgamation at the next general election."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I am so pleased to sign my name to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Petitions? The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm so pleased to sign my name to that.

1550

The Speaker: That brings us to the end of petitions.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to point out that Bill 92, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001, has been on the books now for almost a year and has not been called for any second reading debate. I would seek the assembly's

unanimous consent that we immediately move into debate on Bill 92.

The Speaker: The member from Erie-Lincoln has asked for unanimous consent to call the bill. I heard a no.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LABOUR RELATIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to amend certain statutes relating to labour relations / Projet de loi 144, Loi modifiant des lois concernant les relations de travail.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 92.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I will take your point of order today later on. We seem to have two things on the—

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Point of order. I would seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 92.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have to ask you a question. We could certainly agree to give unanimous consent for it to be called. Let's debate the issue. Let's hear what members have to say on this important piece of legislation. I just don't know why the government House leader is blocking the administration of this bill.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to have second and third reading? Do we have that unanimous consent? I heard a no.

I'm going to call it again. Government House leader, could you call—

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Government order G144.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): Again, I move second reading of Bill 144, An Act to amend certain statutes relating to labour relations.

I'm pleased to be able to initiate second reading debate of the Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005. It is an act that will restore fairness and balance to labour relations in the province of Ontario. After 15 years of one government and then another trying to erode or destroy the historical stability and balance that has characterized labour relations, this legislation will help restore the fairness and balance that has long characterized labour relations in the province of Ontario. It has long characterized labour relations; it has long provided the historical foundation necessary for prosperity in the province of Ontario as well as a legal labour

relations fabric that is fair to employers, fair to workers, and good for all of the people of Ontario.

Before the changes made to the labour relations system over the 15 years before we became the government, it was a system that for decades had been characterized as one generally supported by all political parties, as one that promoted confidence in the law and as one that led to as great a workplace stability as one could hope to achieve. It increased productivity, it increased investor confidence and it promoted the prosperity which characterized Ontario's society between 1950 and 1990.

One of the most important functions of a government when it comes to labour relations is to remember the important characteristic that neutrality provides in promoting confidence in the labour relations framework. When the government tries to intervene and tilt the balance in favour of either business or labour and does so actively and deliberately, it erodes confidence in the system; it erodes respect for the law; it erodes the historical balance; it erodes the foundation on which prosperity is based; it erodes fairness in our labour relations system. That's what happened over the 15 years before we became the government. We campaigned on, and are now delivering, legislation which restores the balance and fairness in labour relations.

Over the previous 15 years, labour relations tended to be characterized by legislation that was polarized, and deliberately polarized; by legislation that actively promoted disharmony, directly or indirectly. It reduced people's confidence in the law; it resulted in instability. Those are not characteristics which will guarantee the long-term prosperity of the province of Ontario.

Il faut rejeter l'approche unilatérale et provocatrice des relations de travail. Un manque d'équité, ou la perception d'un manque d'équité, nuit à la confiance dans le système. Cette approche nuit aussi à la productivité et a un impact négatif sur l'économie de l'Ontario.

This bill brings back the balance and stability that characterized the labour relations environment for the decades between 1950 and 1990. It undoes the partisan reforms of the two previous governments and restores laws that long had the confidence of governments of different political stripes and the confidence of the people of Ontario. It was a time for fairness; it was a time for balance. Today is a time to return to that fairness and that balance because, again, a fair and balanced approach promotes stability and prosperity. A fair and balanced approach enables an economy to adapt to changing circumstances and to promote the type of long-term prosperity that Ontario deserves and Ontario needs again.

Our legislation will remove some of the unnecessary and provocative measures which fostered disharmony and instability. For example, it will remove the requirement to post decertification information. It will remove the requirement for only unions to disclose the remuneration paid to all directors, officers and employees earning \$100,000 or more in salary and taxable benefits per year.

It will restore the Ontario Labour Relations Board's historic, long-standing power to address the worst labour

relations behaviour through effective remedies, and I'll return to this in a moment.

It will restore the OLRB's traditional power to certify a union where an employer has breached the province's labour relations laws during a union organizing campaign and where, as a result, the employees' true wishes—their democratic wishes—are not likely to be reflected in a vote. This would be balanced by restoring the OLRB's power to dismiss an application for certification where a union violates the labour relations laws during an organizing campaign.

It would also restore the OLRB's power to reinstate workers on an interim basis who were fired or disciplined during a union organizing campaign because they were involved in exercising their rights under the act.

1600

This legislation would also recognize the distinct nature of construction in the province of Ontario in two ways. First, it would make permanent the special bargaining and dispute resolution regime for the residential construction sector in the city of Toronto and the regions of Halton, Peel, York, Durham and Simcoe county. Finally, it would add the option of a card-based certification system as an alternative to the vote-based system in construction, and only in construction, recognizing the unique factors which affect construction in Ontario.

We have decided upon these changes after listening, after watching for the previous 15 years, and after recognizing the departure from the historic principles that have characterized labour relations in Ontario. We are bringing about a restoration of stability, fairness and balance in this province.

I would like to point out that a number of our proposals have been discussed for some period of time. Labour relations is always a subject of a great deal of discussion. I have met with many representatives of both business and labour since my appointment as the Minister of Labour. I have heard from many people. These changes will indeed promote the type of fairness and balance that has characterized labour relations in Ontario.

Some will say that we don't go far enough and others will say that it's too much. It's the historical balance which characterized labour relations, it's governing not for one extreme or the other, but in the best interests of all of the people of the province, that is important in labour relations.

Now what I'd like to do is speak to some of the issues and the highlights of the legislation.

I spoke in my introductory remarks about fairness, about how government has an obligation to ensure that it doesn't intervene directly in an unfair way to simply favour one side or the other. One of the things this legislation will do is eliminate the requirement that unionized businesses post a decertification poster in their workplace. What, one can ask rhetorically, was the purpose of that? Promoting harmony and promoting stability should be goals of government legislation, but the previous Tory government required unionized workplaces to post a decertification poster in their workplace. It didn't give

them the option; it required them. It didn't provide the posters; they had to buy them. That type of initiative characterized the approach the previous government took to labour relations. It wasn't interested in harmony, but confrontation. It wasn't interested in stability, but instability. It wasn't interested in fairness, because that did not promote it. They were only interested in favouring one side to the exclusion of the other. And those posters had to be placed whether the employer wanted them or not.

There has always been a lot of information about decertification and certification available through the Ontario Labour Relations Board. It's balanced labour relations information. It's available to all who inquire. The previous government was obviously afraid that workers would access the information in a balanced way, and they tried to change the rules in an unfair way. They did change the rules in an unfair way, requiring the posting of decertification posters.

Interestingly, they didn't require the posting of certification posters in all of the uncertified workplaces in the province of Ontario. That at least would have been balanced. It at least would have been fair and would have achieved the goal that they sometimes suggest of attempting to get information out to workers in the province. But of course they didn't do that. They wouldn't do that.

The decertification posters have to go, and the decertifications, in fact, are going to go if this legislation is passed by the Legislature.

We're trying to return to a fair and balanced approach in our labour relations fabric in the province of Ontario, and this is one of those symbols that will assist not only in achieving fairness but in providing the appearance of fairness. That law has to go, and it will.

What about union salary disclosure? It's interesting: Once again this is a one-sided approach to labour relations that appears to have characterized the previous government's initiatives. If they wanted workers to have information about salary, why didn't they provide an equivalent provision so that the salaries of all executives earning more than \$100,000 a year, plus benefits, would be disclosed? They wouldn't do that. They didn't do that because they weren't interested in balance; they were only interested in a one-sided approach to labour relations.

There have long been provisions in the Labour Relations Act which provide for disclosure of information. For example, under section 92, a union member can apply to the board for disclosure of an audited financial statement, and the board has certain powers if that's not complied with. Secondly, under section 93, where a union administers health, vacation pay or pension benefits, the board has the power and a member can apply for a statement disclosing even more financial information. Again, if the union doesn't comply, the board can order.

Under most union constitutions, there is already the power of disclosure for union salary information. This provision, like the previous provision, increased administration, increased unnecessary work by the government,

and was unfair, unbalanced and unnecessary. Again, it has to go, and with the passage of this legislation it will go.

What about the amendments to the Ambulance Services Collective Bargaining Act? We're changing the act to comply with a Supreme Court of Canada decision about the appointment of arbitrators. It's interesting, while we're on this theme of fairness, while we're on this theme of balance, to remember what that decision said. Historically, when arbitrators were appointed by the Minister of Labour to deal with interest disputes between workers, whether it was in the ambulance sector, whether it was in the hospital sector, those arbitrators were chosen from lists of qualified persons who had been jointly agreed to by labour and management. The reason for that was so that there was the appearance of fairness, the appearance of impartiality, which is crucial to ensuring stable and harmonious labour relations.

One of the previous Ministers of Labour in the Tory government departed from that long-standing practice and started appointing individuals who were not vetted or from the lists. This was challenged and went to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada said that the minister can't just appoint whom he or she likes; they have to be persons qualified to act. The changes to the Ambulance Services Collective Bargaining Act ensure that the minister will appoint persons to act as interest arbitrators who fulfill the requirements of the Supreme Court of Canada decision and are indeed qualified to act.

The importance is not the change in the legislation. The importance is an acknowledgment by this government of something that had been acknowledged by all the governments before the last one, which is that you have to have impartiality in your interest arbitration system. You have to have fairness. The previous government gave the appearance of departing from those principles; we're restoring those principles.

1610

What are the other changes in the legislation? Historically, there was a remedial certification power in labour relations. It's been in the Labour Relations Act, in one form or another, since 1950. It was amended and strengthened in 1975. In fact, it existed between 1995 and 1998 under the previous Tory government. It existed because it's necessary. What the remedial certification power said was that if an employer engaged in conduct that violated the act, which made it impossible or unlikely to determine the true wishes of the workers in a bargaining unit, the board had power to try to remedy the effect of the employer misconduct. But if those remedies were not sufficient, the board could take the extraordinary step and certify the bargaining unit. In other words, if there's a right, there must be a remedy.

Violations of the act which remove the democratic right of workers to decide whether they wish or don't wish to be part of a bargaining unit cannot be condoned. Breaches of the law cannot be sanctioned. There has to be a remedy for them when they're serious, when they

effectively remove the workers' right to decide for themselves whether they wish to be a part of a bargaining unit or not. When no other remedy will undo the effect of the employer's misconduct, remedial certification was the answer.

It wasn't exercised often. Between 1980 and 1998 there were approximately 11,200 certifications in the province of Ontario. The remedial certification power was exercised less than 100 times—about 0.73%—but it acted as an effective deterrent. It said to one and all in the labour relations community that breaches of the law are not tolerated. The board will effect a remedy, and if no other remedy is sufficient, the board can step in and do what the employer was trying to avoid, which is certify the bargaining unit.

This provision was eliminated in 1998, in favour only—only—of a remedy consisting of a second vote. Well, the second-vote remedy in such circumstances is a bit like drawing the second bucket of water from a poisoned well: The product is no different, and it's no more fit to drink than the first bucket. Without the remedial certification power, there was no effective remedy for these serious breaches of the law. With this series of amendments, we are restoring the remedial certification power to the labour relations landscape in Ontario. It will ensure fairness, it will promote stability, and it will promote the effective choice of workers in Ontario. It will promote workplace democracy in Ontario.

What about the interim reinstatement power? Before I get to that, let me speak to another amendment, which is the flip side of remedial certification for employer misconduct. What happens if a bargaining agent engages in serious breaches of the law for which there is no effective remedy? The previous government correctly identified the necessary balance between remedial certification and the penalty stop for union misconduct. We are restoring the power in the board to say to a bargaining agent that engages in violations of the act for which there is no other remedy, which effectively take away the worker's right to choose whether they wish to be part of a bargaining unit or not, "Stop. You can't certify those workers, and you're barred from doing so for a period of a year."

Through these two provisions, which are balanced, we are ensuring that violations of the law have a remedy, that they will not be condoned and that the workers' right to choose is going to be supported and promoted in the province of Ontario.

The interim reinstatement powers: During an organizing drive, if an employer engages in disciplinary action against a worker, whether by firing, by significantly changing their working conditions or by transferring them—not for legitimate labour relations reasons but because they are involved in an organizing drive, are part of an organizing campaign or are exercising their rights under the act—if an employer did that, it would send a chill throughout the workplace.

If there is no remedy for that type of conduct, again, it will effectively make it impossible to determine whether

the workers in the workplace, whether through cards or a vote, wish to be part of a union or not. There needs to be a remedy on the part of the board to ensure that employer misconduct in those circumstances will not be countenanced and that the workers will not experience the chill of misconduct. There needs to be a remedy, and what we are doing is restoring the interim reinstatement power to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. We are going to ensure that employers do not fire or discipline workers simply because they are exercising their rights under the act in the context of an organizing drive. Again, the purpose of this is to restore balance and fairness.

All of these provisions that I've outlined apply to every worker in the province of Ontario. They will promote balance and fairness for all. With respect to interim reinstatement and remedial certification, the purpose of government is to ensure that the wishes of the workers are respected, that the workers' right to decide for themselves whether to be part of a bargaining unit or not will be respected and that workplace democracy will be promoted.

What about the construction sector? This act contains two special and specific provisions for the construction sector; one applies to the residential sector. Of course, construction has always been recognized as being special in the labour relations landscape. It has a special part of the act. It has special bargaining regimes. It has special bargaining-unit-recognition regimes. It has historically had, for many years, special bargaining regimes in the ICI sector. It requires workers in the ICI sector to bargain province-wide. So a provision which applies only to construction, as opposed to some other sector, is not a surprise in the labour relations landscape in Ontario.

There are two provisions in this legislation which affect construction. First, residential construction: The previous government brought in some legislation which provided for a special bargaining regime in residential construction in Toronto and the surrounding area. It arose out of some very difficult labour relations situations in the 1990s, particularly the late 1990s. In fact, there was one summer, the summer of 1999, when construction almost stopped in many places in the greater Toronto area because of difficulties involved in labour relations. So the previous government brought in legislation which required a special bargaining regime in residential construction. It required three-year agreements. It required that there could only be a strike or a lockout for a 46-day window, and that at the end of that, if the parties had not agreed, the matter would proceed to arbitration. Well, we listened. We listened to the home builders' associations in the greater Toronto area, we listened to many consumers, and the fact of the matter is that that worked.

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The purpose of labour relations is to encourage harmony and promote stability that will result in prosperity. Through this legislation, we are continuing that special bargaining regime for labour relations in the residential construction area in the greater Toronto and surrounding area. It will promote stability and harmony.

It will still ensure that there can be a lockout or strike during the 46-day window, but the overriding principle is to respect rights and promote balance and stability. That is what that provision will do.

There is one other provision which affects construction. Of course, construction is a huge contributor to the Ontario economy. Its contribution to the GDP of the province in 2003 was over \$20 billion. In fact, as of 2003, the Ontario Construction Secretariat estimates that there were more than 411,000 workers in the province who work in construction. It is a critical, crucial part of our economy.

The residential construction bargaining regime, which is being continued through this legislation, will ensure that those involved in residential construction in the greater Toronto and surrounding area will be able to continue to work for the betterment of all the people of the province.

There is one other provision in the act which affects construction, and that is a provision relating to the certification of workers in construction. There is at present a vote-based regime. We're bringing in provisions which will support the worker's right to choose through remedial certification and interim reinstatement. But in construction, because of its special nature, we need to do something else. We need to include an option of card-based certification, and with this piece of legislation, we are including that as an option in construction only.

Why are we doing it? Again, construction has long been recognized as being special and distinct. Within construction, you have workplaces that change location—they start up, they're completed, they move on—and workforces that expand and contract with great rapidity. In these special circumstances, in order to properly ensure that workers have the right to decide whether to be certified or not, and to have that right respected, we need to include the option of card-based certification. The bargaining agent proposing certification will have the option of deciding whether to proceed with the card-based system or with the vote. Of course, this will be overseen by the impartial observer, the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Through these provisions, we are ensuring that balance is restored to labour relations, that harmony is promoted, that the historical stability that has characterized labour relations and has contributed to prosperity in Ontario, is continued. These changes do not exist in a vacuum, of course. They are part of a number of changes this government has made to assist working families, to protect the most vulnerable workers and to assist working people, particularly those in the most vulnerable situations.

In my last few minutes, I might just address one or two of those, because for the first time in nine years, this government increased the minimum wage. It did so again this past February and will continue to do so until February 1, 2007, when it reaches \$8 an hour. It's the first time in nine years that the minimum wage, which is

for the most vulnerable workers in the province, had been increased, and it will assist the most vulnerable workers in the province.

We campaigned on and have now delivered on our promise to end the 60-hour workweek, so that now, before workers work more than 48 hours in a week, not only must they agree, not only must the employer agree, but the province has to agree. This type of protection from the province, which existed for decades in the labour relations landscape in the province of Ontario and was eliminated by the previous government, is being restored. That will assist the most vulnerable workers in the province, the workers who have no effective bargaining power.

We brought in the family medical leave legislation so that those in a very difficult situation, those who had to make the choice between their job and being with a dying relative, would have up to eight weeks of job-protected leave. We brought in and passed that legislation. Again, this assists workers in the most vulnerable of circumstances. It has long been said that women are, by far, the primary caregivers.

We have taken significant steps to ensure that our employment standards legislation, which provides a foundation for the rights of all workers and protects particularly those workers who have no effective bargaining power themselves, is enforced. We've taken more enforcement activity in the last 10 months than in the previous 10 years, a significant signal to any who would believe that they could avoid their obligations under the Employment Standards Act or violate the act with impunity.

We've taken steps to ensure that employers, through the workplace gateway, a Web-based information service, know about their rights and obligations and that workers, particularly those whose first language is not English or French, particularly those recently arrived in the province who are not otherwise fully aware of their rights and responsibilities, know their rights and responsibilities. We have published a series of information documents, pamphlets, in 19 languages besides English and French to ensure that particularly recent arrivals to the province of Ontario know their rights and know how to get a remedy for their rights. With our enhanced enforcement, they now have a government which will protect their rights.

So this government has taken substantial steps to protect the rights of the vulnerable, to protect the rights of minorities, to protect the rights of women and men. Through this labour relations series of amendments, we are restoring fairness, restoring balance; we are ensuring that the principles which characterized labour relations in the province of Ontario and which guaranteed its prosperity and stability for so many years, from 1950 to 1990—we are guaranteeing that the historical foundation for prosperity in the province of Ontario will continue.

That's what I commend to this House and I commend to the people of Ontario. I thank you for your attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's very interesting to stand here today and listen to the comments from the minister on Bill 144, but I think what we have to be concerned about in this House in a lot of cases is the economic development and job creation that we have in our individual communities. I can tell you that this government has made an announcement in my community, the closing of the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia, which will have a devastating effect on the economy of the city of Orillia. Twenty-nine million dollars is the payroll at the Huronia Regional Centre; 680 people.

Minister Papatello has decided that she'd like to see this facility closed by 2009. She's doing this without a plan. We're seeing 680 jobs removed from the city of Orillia and area.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Unionized jobs.

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Mr. Dunlop: Yes, they are; a lot of these jobs are OPSEU. I'll be the first to say that. But I can tell you that when a government is on the one hand telling you how wonderful they're doing with this new legislation and how it's going to be the be-all and end-all, in my community—and it's also going to affect Smiths Falls and Blenheim, two other facilities—it will have a devastating effect. No matter what the minister says when it comes to his labour legislation, it will replace 680 jobs in the city of Orillia, in that community. No matter what this government tries to do, they won't recover from that, with the political aftermath and also the very bad feelings that a community has toward a government that would close a facility like this without a plan. They are saying they have a plan, but they're not talking to the parents; they're not talking to the employees, the people who are going to be out of work in four years' time. That's having a devastating effect on the community of Orillia.

Mr. Kormos: I hopefully am going to have a chance to participate in this debate by way of my leadoff in about one hour and five minutes' time.

I want to make it quite clear that I believe in the union. I believe in the union as an important social and economic institution. I believe that unionized workers are more productive workers. I believe that unionized workplaces are safer workplaces, more profitable workplaces for their owners, and inevitably workplaces wherein workers enjoy a fairer share of the wealth they create. And I believe that every worker—every worker, every single worker, including agricultural workers in this province—has the right to form themselves into a trade union and to freely collectively bargain. I believe that the trade union movement, its membership and its struggles, is responsible for the creation of the working middle class, and that without that working middle class in this province there wouldn't have been the level of prosperity that was not only acquired but passed on from generation to generation, including to my generation, by immigrant working-class parents in my own right.

I recall oh so well the notorious—now notorious—and obscene Bill 7 brought forward as amongst the first

pieces of legislation by the Harris Tories, and the savaging of rights of workers by that Bill 7. Let's not forget that what Bill 7 did, amongst so many other things, but certainly first and foremost, was deny workers in this province the right to card-based certification. I say to you that if we're going to restore even a modest amount of justice to workers in this province, it's imperative that every worker in the province of Ontario have the right to card certification.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate on second reading of Bill 144. Having listened to three previous speakers, those being the Minister of Labour, the member for Simcoe North and the member for Niagara Centre, I would think anybody who was watching this debate on TV or who may catch it from the audience would see that the proposal that's being put forward is a reasonable step forward to provide labour stability in this province. It's something that I believe is sorely needed. Is it everything everybody wants? Obviously it's not, from the comments that have come forward. Is it too much for some people? Obviously, from the comments that we've heard today from the opposition, they feel it's going too far.

If you look back, though, at the turmoil that has taken place through the last 15 years—if you look back at the NDP years, jobs simply fled this province. If you look back at the Tory years, it was a decade of labour unrest. We've created more jobs in our first year than you guys did, and you know it. It was a decade of silly, mean-spirited decertification posters, \$100,000 disclosures on union officials. It was mean-spirited, it was silly, and it did nothing to further the economy.

You've got a government here that is very serious about labour stability in this province. It's very serious about growing the economy. The previous government couldn't do anything with the automobile strategy. In my own community of Oakville, the previous government was prepared to let 4,000 jobs go by the wayside. This is a government that believes in balance, that believes in investing in the economy and that believes in providing labour stability, because we know that the future of this economy is strong labour and strong business working together.

Thank you; it was a pleasure.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Baird: Speaker, because you're not going to, it's my pleasure to introduce my good friend Brother Wayne Samuelson from the Ontario Federation of Labour, who joins us here today. He's someone who stands up for working men and women in this province.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Don't forget Mr. Cartwright.

Mr. Baird: And Mr. Cartwright as well, and other friends.

I just want to ask in this question and comment section, what does the minister fear from a secret ballot vote? Where would the intimidation possibly be in a secret ballot vote? They have secret ballot votes in

Russia. They have secret ballot votes in Iraq. They have secret ballot votes all over the world. In Iraq, they have secret ballot votes.

Mrs. Witmer: What do you fear?

Mr. Baird: What do you fear about a secret ballot vote? Why, in 2005, are we debating the inherent value of a secret ballot vote? It works in liberal democracies everywhere. If you're pushed by the employer or by the union to go one way, when you get in that ballot booth you are free to vote for whoever you want, yes or no.

So I say to the minister, stand in your place and tell the people of Ontario why you are engaging in this war against the secret ballot vote. It is outrageous; it is wrong. We will fight this mean-spirited, undemocratic legislation and see that this minister gets demoted to Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Labour has two minutes to reply.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: In fact, this legislation promotes workplace democracy.

One of the ironies in what the member has said—and I'd like to thank the member, along with the members from Simcoe North, Niagara Centre and Oakville for their contributions to the debate—is that under the previous government's approach to labour relations, if an employer engaged in misconduct that made it unlikely to determine through a secret ballot what the true wishes of workers were, the previous government made sure that there would be no remedy for that misconduct. In other words, they undermined the democratic principle, and they gave licence to the few who would undermine democracy to do what they wanted because they knew there would be no consequence.

It's interesting that between 1995 and 1998 they thought the remedial certification power was important—because historically, it had characterized labour relations. Premier Bill Davis wasn't afraid of remedial certification. Premier Robarts wasn't afraid of remedial certification. Premier Frost wasn't afraid of remedial certification. What happened in 1998 to change their minds so completely? They accomplished the goal—it must have been a goal—of ensuring that employer misconduct would have no remedy. Well, it must. The rule of law must be respected, and those who would engage in violations of the law must know that if they undermine the democratic right of individuals to choose, there will be a consequence. The ultimate consequence is that they get something they don't like, which is certification.

We are restoring and enhancing democracy and restoring and enhancing the right of people to choose. We are returning Ontario to its historical balance.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Witmer: As the labour critic for our party, I am pleased to be able to speak to the Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment Act, Bill 144, which received first reading in November 2004 and which has now been called for second reading. I would have to say at the outset, however, speaking on behalf of our caucus, that I

wish to express concern and opposition to this bill as it is presently drafted.

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If the minister takes a look at his goals, despite the purported goals of this bill, as he says them to be and as published by the Ministry of Labour, goals such as the promotion of economic prosperity and ensuring fairness and choice in Ontario workplaces—I wish to convey to the minister that the changes contained in this bill will have the exact opposite effect. They will not promote economic prosperity, they will not ensure fairness and they will not allow for choice in Ontario's workplaces. What this bill will do, however, is erode the fundamental principles of democracy in the workplace. It will strip the workers of their democratic rights. It will lead to more litigation, more uncertainty and to employees having less access to information about their workplace rights. But most importantly for employees, it is going to threaten their jobs, because this bill has the potential to gravely injure economic growth and future job creation in this province.

The changes in Bill 144 appear to be motivated more by politics than productivity. They are more about payback for union support, especially payback to the construction unions. If you take a look at the donations that were made to the Liberal Party, you will probably understand.

The changes in Bill 144 are draconian. They actually turn back the clock 15 years in labour relations, back to the Bob Rae days. If we remember the Bob Rae days, we saw the loss of 10,000 jobs in this province. Bill 144 will have very severe, negative implications for businesses in this province, on jobs for people and on investment, because what it does is signal a very serious shift in labour relations. This Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty is loudly proclaiming that Ontario is no longer open for business. It is shifting the balance in labour relations and making it easier to unionize. This bill, I would emphasize again, has the potential of driving new job creation and investment away from Ontario. In fact, I've already heard from employers, the creators of jobs in Ontario, that they are waiting to see what's going to happen with this bill.

You see, at the present time, you can go to other jurisdictions. You can move, if you want, to the Far East, to China. You can move to Mexico, you can move to the United States and you can move to other provinces. They don't need to create the jobs in this province; in fact, they can close their factories today and move elsewhere. I can tell you, there are people who are delaying investment decisions and future expansions and even considering closing down their operations here if this bill moves forward without any major amendments.

As proof of this, we only have to take a look at what happened between 1990 and 1995, when the Rae government introduced legislation that tilted the balance and ensured that unionization was given more and more opportunity. Experience has shown that investors did not invest in Ontario between 1990 and 1995 and, regret-

tably, as I said before, we actually lost 10,000 jobs in this province. I hope this Liberal government keeps this in mind. We have many young people in this province who will be looking for jobs, and we certainly have middle-aged and older people looking for jobs. I can tell you, Bill 144 is not going to have a positive impact on future job creation and investment in this province.

When our government restored balance in labour relations in 1995 with Bill 7, there was a message that went out to investors around the world, to investors in the province of Ontario, that Ontario was again open for business. As a result of this, we saw the private sector create more than one million jobs in the next eight years. In fact, this growing economy enabled us to increase funding for services such as health and education. For example, we were able to increase health care funding by \$10 billion. We expanded access to hospital emergency departments by \$750 million. Cancer care treatment was increased by more than \$575 million, including the doubling of Cancer Care Ontario's funding. The Ontario breast screening program was able to triple the number of screens per year. Cardiac care improved. Over \$154 million in new funding was provided and we saw the number of procedures in the cardiac area increase by 61,000. In fact, we were able to cut waiting times by 53%. We added 16 regional and district stroke centres between 2000 and 2003. In long-term care, we invested \$1.2 billion for 20,000 new long-term-care beds, a 35% increase. We were able to increase MRIs from 12 in 1995 to 52 in 2003. We were able to add new drugs—about 1,436 new drug products—to the Ontario drug benefit program. As well, in order to combat the doctor shortage, we announced the creation of a new medical school in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, and we were able to give incentives to students with free tuition for those who were willing to go to underserved areas. We also established TeleHealth. We were the ones who added nurse practitioners and expanded the opportunities for foreign-trained doctors. You can see that as a result of job creation in this province, we were able to invest and add \$10 billion to improve access to health care in the province.

We were also able to make substantial investments in education, and we increased educational funding, after Dr. Rozanski made his report, by an additional \$2 billion. That was the highest level in the history of this province.

So it's very important to remember that if you don't have jobs and if you don't have investment and we see a downturn in the economy, we're not going to have the money to support increased access to health care and a better education for the children and people in this province.

Again I emphasize that none of these investments in health, none of these investments in education could have been made without a successful economy. That success was driven because there were changes to legislation that made Ontario an attractive place for business to locate and expand. We saw a tremendous number of businesses come into this province because of a well-balanced

approach to labour relations. Now we have a situation where, unless this government is prepared to make major amendments or, preferably, totally withdraw this bill, the uncertainty created by this bill in the business community is going to delay or postpone forever decisions about investment and new hiring. The potential loss of investment and job creation will erode the government's ability to invest in priorities such as health and education. I ask this government, if investment goes to other parts of the world, other states or other provinces, where will you get the money to implement the recommendations of the Rae report? Where will you get the money to decrease waiting times for health services and increased access to care?

1650

In fact, this government has already indicated that they are decreasing access to care with the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic services and physiotherapy. We also have a government that is not addressing the doctor shortage and is forcing hospitals to cut services. This government also recently provided severance in order that 800 nurses could be fired. They have broken their promise to hire 8,000 more nurses in order to improve access to care.

But now let's take a look specifically at what's contained in Bill 144. Let's examine the threat posed by this bill to the fundamental principles of democracy, as it removes the employees' democratic right to vote on whether or not they choose a union by impeding the employees' rights to free speech. The elimination of secret ballot voting for certification is an outright attack on the democratic rights of employees. Currently, a secret ballot vote, the cornerstone of any democratic process anywhere in the world, must be held before a union can be certified. In fact, it was employees who asked for secret ballot votes, and it was employees who were given secret ballot votes under Bill 7. This enabled employees to make their decision to support or oppose a union free from any coercion, whether it be from an employer, the press, their peers or union organizers. It was to protect employees against the pressure or the intimidation that we heard was sometimes associated with getting union membership cards signed. Regrettably, we did hear many examples of peer pressure and intimidation in getting people to sign the cards.

This government, with Bill 144, now proposes to go back to card-based certification in the construction sector. They are saying that if more than 55% of employees sign cards, the union will be certified without a vote. They don't seem to be concerned with possible intimidation or harassment, which I can tell you took place not only in the workplace but also at the homes where these people resided. It's unbelievable that they are not concerned with workers.

This government also proposes to impede the employer's right to free speech by allowing automatic certification. Some people call what they're going to be doing automatic penalty certification. This means that the labour relations board may allow automatic union certifi-

cation if an employer is found to be in breach of the Labour Relations Act during a certification drive. In other words, if he or she, the employer, does something that is interpreted as an unfair labour practice during a union organizing drive, the OLRB will have the ability to unilaterally certify the union. This could happen regardless of any employee vote or the number of signed membership cards. Unions, regrettably, have in the past—and probably will in the future—alleged “unfair labour practices.” In order to resolve this, we’re going to see much legal wrangling and we’re going to see costs being incurred by employers. Again, this government doesn’t seem to care.

So not only will this bill make it easier for union organizers to certify employees, it will also make it more difficult to decertify a union once it is installed, because again, this bill proposes to remove decertification information posters from the workplace. These posters were intended to supply unbiased, government-approved information to employees on how to remove an unwanted union. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes employees who are unionized at some point decide they don’t want a union. This was an opportunity for them to have the right of receiving unbiased, government-improved information there, telling them what they could do to remove that union.

What we’re seeing here is legislation that once again demonstrates the incompetence and short-sightedness of the McGuinty government and their fiscal mismanagement of the economy of this province. This government has proceeded and moved forward with this legislation despite the advice and recommendations they have been given by people in the labour relations community in this province, and I want to take a look at some of the advice they got.

Even prior to the introduction of this bill, and following an October meeting with the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, Minister Bentley was given advice not to do what he’s doing. He was advised not to reinstate automatic certification in instances where an employer is found to be in breach of the Labour Relations Act during a certification drive. Some of the reasons that the association gave him were the following:

“(1) The unions will be motivated to file unfair labour practice complaints in any certification drives which they believe do not have sufficient support to win a vote, and will use such application as leverage against employers.

“(2) Employers’ freedom of speech will be impugned, preventing employers from expressing their view with respect to the intervention of a third party in their employment relationship with their employees.

“(3) The integrity of secret ballot votes within five days will be diminished and we will return to instances where employees and their employers will become unionized despite a contrary result in the ballot box, as was the case in the Wal-Mart decision.

“(4) There will be an overall destabilizing of the balance of labour relations in an environment where employers risk significant consequences for breaching the

Labour Relations Act and unions have no corresponding risk.”

Finally, this association, the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, said to the minister, “Experience has shown in the period from 1990 to 1995 that investors did not invest in Ontario as a result of labour relations legislation, including automatic certification.” However, the minister did not listen.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has also been warning the minister since February 2004 about the negative economic implications this bill would have on Ontario business if introduced. In a letter to the minister, the CFIB expressed their support of labour relations that holds that the “law must require a supervised secret ballot vote prior to the certification of a union in every case.” They went on to say that the reason the CFIB feels so strongly about this is because, “Secret ballot votes in the labour relations setting allow employees to make their decision to support or oppose the union free from any arm-twisting by the employer, the union or peers.” I would agree with that statement.

They also went on to express their concern regarding penalty certification, urging the government to forgo any plans to reinstate this policy. They indicated that they felt there were other remedies for employer misconduct that would not see, in exchange, the employees’ fundamental democratic right to a secret ballot vote eliminated.

Despite this type of informative and well-reasoned advice from stakeholders, the government decided to ignore it, and they proceeded to move forward and introduce this very draconian piece of legislation.

1700

I want to quote from people who have responded since the legislation was introduced in November, and who are very concerned about the impact of these changes on the labour environment and also on the economy in Ontario. Again, I’m going to begin with some quotes from the CFIB. The CFIB, when the announcement was made, indicated and said:

“Today’s announcement shows that this government is prepared to strip Ontario workers of their democratic rights in order to pander to its union friends.

“It’s insulting to employers and penalizes workers who might not want to join a union. Pretending the goal of this legislation is ensuring fairness and choice in Ontario’s workplaces would be laughable if the consequences weren’t so serious.” They go on to say, “The minister’s statement shows deliberate deception and hypocrisy. To pretend this attack on the rights of individual workers will promote labour fairness and stability is crass misrepresentation.”

They went on to say as well that the move to restore penalty certification and take away the secret ballot vote in the construction sector is seriously disturbing because, they say, “Secret ballot votes are a cornerstone of our democratic tradition in Ontario and in Canada. Secret ballots in the labour relations setting allow employees to make their decision to support or oppose the union free from any coercion from employers, union organizers or—their own—“peers.”

As you can see, obviously there is concern about the impact of this legislation on employees' right to a democratic vote. Basically, this legislation takes away the choice of employees, despite the comments that have been made by the minister today.

I also want to quote from the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association, which wrote a letter to the minister on January 6, 2005. They talk about Bill 144, An Act to amend certain statutes relating to labour relations, which made permanent the features contained in the previous government's Bill 69 and Bill 179 that covered the 2001 and 2004 rounds of collective bargaining for the residential construction industry within the GTA. They say:

"You will be aware that as a result of labour disruptions that paralyzed the GTA new home building industry in the summer of 1998, the then government"—referring to our government—"introduced legislation to provide greater certainty for all those involved including new home buyers."

They go on to say that the legislation we introduced to cover the 2001 and 2004 rounds of collective bargaining for the residential construction industry within the GTA "worked exceedingly well." The minister talked about the fact that there was all this labour unrest and labour instability. Well, that is definitely not true. They point out here that, "In 2001 there was only one brief strike and in 2004 there was none." In fact, they say that the system our government put in place "succeeded in what it aimed to do, namely to provide greater certainty for builders, subcontractors, unions, workers and most importantly new home buyers."

They go on to say, however, that they're not happy that the amendments are going to be included in this bill. They also go on to say that the Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association "is a strong supporter of the current certification system, which mandates a secret ballot vote. Transparency must be maintained during union organizing efforts. We believe the proposed changes"—that is, the changes in Bill 144—"will not be helpful to the overall residential construction labour climate, will lead to increased uncertainty and will undermine the rights of employees."

They go on to say that the residential construction industry in the GTA is a strong contributor to the Ontario economy in that every new home or condominium supports three jobs. They say, "Last year, our industry supported nearly 130,000 full-time jobs." They conclude by saying to the minister, "It is important that the industry remains strong," and they advise him not to jeopardize that industry based on a return to a confrontational approach between labour and management in labour relations.

Again, the interpretation is that Bill 144 sets the stage for a return to a confrontational approach and puts in jeopardy the stability we have seen in the residential construction industry in the GTA as a result of the legislation that we introduced, and the changes you are now prepared to make are going to destabilize that industry. I

would again say to the minister, I hope you will take some of the advice that's being offered to you.

I have a letter here from the Open Shop Contractors Association. They begin by saying, "Bill 144 was introduced without meaningful consultation." They say that it "seriously undermines the trust that has been developing with the government over joint labour/management consultations on construction issues" and that the bill should be withdrawn until full consultations have occurred. "At the very least, the bill must be put before the appropriate committee of the Legislature for public hearings."

Well, that's the very least this minister and this government can do. In fact, I would hope that's what they are going to do. Surely, if they're so confident in this legislation, they are not opposed to having it scrutinized and considering amendments that are not going to put in jeopardy the economy of this province.

The Open Shop Contractors Association goes on to say—and they want to talk first about certification based on membership information—"We believe that certifying a trade union without the benefit of a representation vote is a significant backward step and contributes to the 'democratic deficit' in the province. It is widely recognized that an expedited certification vote is the best test for employees' choice, and removing it will result in a return to a more fractious certification process. Contractors will be concerned about whether an employee has been coerced, intimidated or simply signed a membership card to avoid having to say no. A secret vote is the ultimate test of employees' wishes and should be maintained in the absence of serious violations of the act by either party.

"Not having a vote is especially problematic in the construction sector because a certification at one site impacts employees on all sites of the contractor. Furthermore, due to the fact that those eligible to vote or to have signed cards is determined as of the date of application, a small contingent of a contractor's workforce at one site could determine the unionized fate of all its employees province-wide. Currently, two employees of a contractor, even with a representation vote, could dictate work rules for hundreds of employees without these employees having a say, and this problem is greatly exacerbated by certification based on membership card evidence alone."

Then they go on to talk about remedial certification: "We appreciate the government is recognizing the need to certify a bargaining agent where the employer has wilfully broken the law to such a degree that it would be difficult for the employees' true wishes to be ascertained." However, they go on to say: "We are concerned that the labour board will find any minor violation of the act as grounds for remedial certification. If the government's intention is to use remedial powers only in exceptional circumstances, then the board should be provided with a listing of what constitutes a serious breach."

They go on to talk about restrictions on free speech: "Removing the requirement that employers post information in a unionized workplace on how to decertify

the union" may be "understandable. However, Bill 144 goes too far in making it an unfair labour practice for an employer to post such information or even to advise employees of their rights under the act. We believe that this is a violation of an employer's right to free speech and may well be unconstitutional. An employer should not be in violation of the act simply for providing factual, government-approved information."

Then, of course, they do indicate that what's missing from your bill are the "non-construction employer" definition changes and the timing of applications.

1710

So again, the Open Shop Contractors Association has a great deal of difficulty and is concerned about the impact of the removal of the democratic vote for employees and the lack of ability of employees to freely express whether or not they want to join a union. They're also concerned about the remedial certification, because they believe that the labour board could find anything a minor violation and use that as an excuse.

I want to turn now to the Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce. They have written the minister, the Honourable Chris Bentley, a letter as of January 20, 2005. They are the second-largest chamber in the province of Ontario; they serve more than 1,700 members. They represent all sectors of the business community—small, medium and large employers—and they provide over 60,000 jobs in one of Ontario's progressive and economically productive regions. However, they are writing the minister to convey their concern and their opposition to Bill 144. They say that the chamber believes that the changes contained in this bill would have the exact opposite effects to the purported goals published by the Ministry of Labour. They believe that the changes in Bill 144 will not only erode the fundamental principles of democracy in the workplace, but they are extremely concerned that, as a result of these changes, we're going to see much more uncertainty in the workplace. There's going to be much more litigation and, of course, employees are going to have considerably less access to information about their workplace rights. They say that you are doing some unnecessary tinkering with the existing labour relations regime and again, they do point out the fact that your proposals are motivated more by politics than productivity. Again, our concern is that this may simply be payback for union support rather than real progress for our province.

In fact, the chamber expresses their disappointment in the manner in which the McGuinty government characterizes its legislative directives in the area of labour relations. They say, "Just as it is a misnomer to refer to Bill 63 as the elimination of the 60-hour workweek, it is incorrect and unfortunate that this government uses such strong terms as 'confusion,' 'mistrust,' 'instability,' 'unhealthy' and 'unfair' to describe our present labour relations regime." They say it does not serve our province well, either within Canada or internationally, to be seen to be labelling our workplace and business environment in this manner. I hope that the Minister of Labour and the

members of this Liberal government will particularly keep that in mind. It doesn't help to have employers who are looking at this province as an opportunity for future investment and job creation hear the minister and this government talk about confusion, mistrust, instability, unhealthiness and unfairness in relationship to labour relations in this province. Any employer hearing those words obviously isn't going to come to this jurisdiction, when today in the global economy he or she can go wherever they want.

The chamber goes on to say, "Our chamber joins with and supports the efforts of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Coalition for Democratic Labour Relations in opposing Bill 144 in its entirety. If passed, the chamber believes that Bill 144 will have a chilling effect on a provincial economy already faced with unparalleled global competition, an ever-increasing tax burden, and a rising Canadian dollar. Further, the potential loss of investment and job creation from such regressive proposals must be recognized, along with the detrimental impact on future tax revenues."

Again, they go on, of course, to ask you to reconsider the points that they've made. They've also indicated to the minister that they would be happy to discuss the bill with him at his convenience.

So again we have the chambers of commerce, and particularly the letter I've read from my own greater Kitchener-Waterloo chamber, expressing their grave concern and their opposition to Bill 144. I put that into the record as well.

We've received many letters from business people in the province of Ontario. I will tell you that obviously some whose investment plans have been put on hold would prefer that they not be identified. But one of the letters that I did receive and I will share with this House is from an individual in New Hamburg. This is from Ontario Drive and Gear Ltd. It is a company that is a world leader in amphibious vehicles. They wrote a letter to the Honourable Chris Bentley on January 25. It is written by the president and CEO, Mr. Stieber. He writes, as so many other people did, as the owner and operator of a manufacturing company in Ontario. He indicates his deep concern about the proposed changes to the Ontario Labour Relations Act, as tabled in Bill 144. What is he concerned about? Well, he is concerned that you are imposing certification as a penalty. He says, "Imposed certification is an inappropriate penalty for unfair labour practices during a certification drive. It takes away the democratic right of workers to choose whether or not they want to be represented by a labour union." He goes on to say, "There are other effective means to ensure that no intimidation from either side occurs. Fines and revotes accomplish the same while respecting the democratic rights of employees as well as the right to free speech of employers."

He talks about certification on the basis of membership cards, and he says, "The essence of any democratic process is voting by secret ballot. Any political election violating this principle would be declared invalid by the

international community. Why should the certification process be any different? A signature on a union card is not a valid vote!" I would agree. We don't know if that individual was harassed or coerced. We don't know. We do know, however, that the reason the secret ballot vote was introduced is because we heard from many employees who were harassed, who were intimidated, who finally just didn't have the willpower to say no. So a signature, as we know, has in the past been obtained by pressure or threats or misrepresentation. Why would we go there again? Unbelievable.

1720

He then goes on to talk about the effect on investment in Ontario's economy: "As a volunteer and ambassador with Canada's Technology Triangle, I am involved in efforts to attract business investment to the Waterloo region. As recently as three years ago, Ontario used to be an excellent location for manufacturing. However, in the meantime, other jurisdictions have moved forward in providing an attractive investment climate.... Within the last two years, Ontario's competitive position has been further eroded by a 30% rise of the Canadian dollar, and Ontario's manufacturing base is being threatened by ever more aggressive competition from China.

"In this situation, Bill 144, as tabled, sends the wrong message to current and potential investors in Ontario's economy. It will increase the perception"—you know, that's important, because perception is reality—"that Ontario has an unbalanced, anti-business political climate and, as such, will support the efforts of other Canadian and American jurisdictions to attract business away from Ontario."

Again, this bill has the potential to reduce the number of jobs in the province of Ontario, and it certainly will discourage people who are considering expanding their business or considering coming into this province.

I now want to make some comments and read into the record a letter from the Coalition for Democratic Labour Relations. Twelve industry associations in this province who represent over 100,000 small, medium and large businesses and who employ roughly two million people in key sectors of Ontario's economy have come together. This is an unusual move, and it only happened one other time. That was when the NDP government introduced their labour law. But they have come together in order to communicate their shared concerns about Bill 144. Who are these industry groups? They are the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Canadian Restaurant and Food Services Association, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Electrical League, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, the Open Shop Contractors Association and the Retail Council of Canada.

They have let the minister know that they have concerns. In fact, they say they are urgently bringing "to your attention the serious impact that Bill 144 ... will have on the provincial economy, and to request your support for our amendments to the legislation."

"When Bill 144 was introduced, it was presented as the tool to achieve 'fairness and balance' in the workplace." Then they highlight and say, "Coalition members couldn't disagree more." It seems nobody believes the minister when he says it's going to be achieve fairness and balance and improve the economy. In fact, they say, "We take issue with the way this bill threatens the fundamental principles of democracy by removing the democratic right of employees to vote on whether or not they choose a union and by impeding an employer's right to free speech."

They go on to express their concern about the fact that they have heard from several of their members that they are reviewing their investment decisions based on the negative effect of Bill 144 if this government goes ahead and implements the bill. They say the labour relations environment is one of the key elements that business people in Ontario and business leaders looking at potential investments in Ontario use to determine when and where to invest in the new plants and stores that create jobs. Without major amendments, the coalition believes the bill will create uncertainty in the business community and will likely delay key decisions about investment and hiring. Again, they express their concern that if we lose investment and if we lose job creation, obviously this government isn't going to be able to invest in the priorities that are important to people in this province, particularly health and education. They also say that the introduction of this bill could not have come at a worse time, especially given the recently revised forecast predicting slower economic growth for Ontario in 2005.

This group of people have come together because of their strong concern and opposition to Bill 144, and their concern that some of the two million people they employ may see their jobs lost if this government moves ahead with Bill 144. Certainly we're not going to see new job creation. So out of concern for workers, for employees in this province, they are developing and have developed, in collaboration, amendments that they believe will achieve fairness and balance. They are encouraging everyone to support the principles of democracy and their amendments.

Let's take a look at their amendments.

They say, "The bill, as drafted," in the case of remedial certification, "will permit the OLRB to order union certification, regardless of the wishes of employees, if it judges that an employer has broken a rule. Public messaging by the government regarding the legislation has stated that remedial certification would be used only as a last resort, but"—and this is a big "but"—"the legislation does not clarify last resort.

"If the government is determined to allow the Ontario Labour Relations Board to make the decision on certification in place of employees, we recommend that this section of the bill be amended to:

"set out the types of conduct that can trigger remedial certification, specifically:

"repetitive acts or threats of physical violence against employees,

"termination of two or more employees known by the employer to be authorized and acting as inside organizers on behalf of the trade union where the terminations are determined by the board to be contrary to the act; and
"repeated breaches of an order of the board."

They also say it should be amended to place the onus of proof on the applicant to prove that no other remedy exists; to provide that a full three-person panel of the board must agree to remedial certification before it can be ordered; and to ensure that in every case, employees are given at least one opportunity to cast a ballot and exercise the democratic right to express their views.

They also have amendments on the issue of the decertification posters. The bill, as drafted, requires that posters explaining the union decertification process, which the act currently requires be posted in workplaces, be taken down. They are concerned not so much that the poster be removed, but—and again, a big "but"—that an employer can be found to have committed an illegal act by simply informing his or her employees about their rights under the act. The coalition proposes that this section of the legislation be amended by removing the provision of the bill creating an offence for failing to remove how-to-decertify posters, and that language be added to clarify that the employer retains the same rights to communicate with his or her employees as the employer has always had. Pretty simple, pretty fair, pretty balanced.

Let's now look at interim reinstatement.

"The bill, as drafted, would grant the Ontario Labour Relations Board the power to reinstate workers dismissed during an organizing campaign. The coalition is concerned this may result in unions filing unsubstantiated claims of dismissals in order to have members reinstated, regardless of the reasons for their being dismissed or the merits of the case. Moreover, this provision does not provide balance as there is absolutely no remedy should the union make frivolous claims." Therefore, the coalition of 12 industries recommends that this section on interim reinstatement be totally withdrawn.

1730

Let's take a look now at card-based certification.

"The bill, as drafted, permits a trade union in the construction industry that has filed an application for certification and has membership cards from more than 55% of employees to be certified without a vote.

"Under the current act, employees who sign cards, and those who do not, still have the right to vote for or against the union by secret ballot vote. Under the proposed legislation, employees would lose this very important fundamental right" of a secret ballot vote. They go on to say that they totally oppose card-based certification in any sector, and they are asking the government to remove this provision from the legislation.

Let's take a look now at the definition of "non-construction employer." They are recommending amendments to the definition of "non-construction employer." They go on to say, "There are currently a number of employers in the province who are bound to collective

agreements with construction trade unions when it is clear that they are not truly 'construction employers.'

"The act currently contemplates these employers being able to make an application and be released from these costly obligations. Unfortunately, the act's current wording is cumbersome and ineffective."

The coalition of 12 industries "recommends that the definition of non-construction employer be amended to provide significant clarity to the issue, and to allow employers who clearly do not operate a construction company to no longer be bound to construction collective agreements."

They have submitted all this information, all these amendments to the minister and to his staff. They have urged him to adopt these amendments in order that he and this government can protect the democratic rights of employees and employers, and in order to ensure that economic investment, job creation and growth will continue to be enjoyed by people in Ontario.

I think you can see that this government's actions on Bill 144 are not supported by people in Ontario. Employees are concerned that they are losing their democratic right to a secret ballot vote. Certainly, employers' rights are also being eliminated.

I want to quote some of the comments we have seen in the newspaper about this bill. Terence Corcoran from the Financial Post writes: "The amendments were portrayed by Mr. Bentley, in masterful Orwellian bafflegab, as an effort by the McGuinty Liberals to promote 'stable labour relations and economic prosperity by introducing legislation that would ensure fairness and choice in Ontario's workplaces.' The province intends, he said, 'to restore balance' and replace laws that had 'swung unfairly in favour of one side or the other.'

"Needless to say, the actual objective is exactly the opposite. Bill 144 ... will in fact tilt the balance of Ontario labour law to favour organized labour at the expense of employers. It will not restore balance, it will remove it.

"That the bill favours unions is beyond question. The biggest sop to labour is the Liberal plan to reverse parts of the previous Conservative government's ... 1998 restrictions on union ability to manipulate the system."

Again, he says that giving the OLRB renewed power to order union certification is "out of all common sense." He is certainly extremely concerned. In fact, he goes on to express his concern with the card-only certification for unions in certain sectors instead of requiring secret ballots. He says he can't understand the minister favouring the restoration of "the almost arbitrary ability of the Ontario Labour Relations Board ... to remedially certify unions."

Certainly, again, he talks about the need to have flexibility in labour relations laws today. He says that, "In a recent Fraser Institute study examining flexibility in labour relations laws, Ontario ranked 52nd out of the 60 US states and Canadian provinces."

He quotes a new study in the Quarterly Journal of Economics which "found that labour relations laws that favour one group over another lead to lower output, employment, investment and productivity."

He says, "The minister's notion that the announced changes would 'ensure fairness and choice in Ontario's workplaces' is almost Orwellian and simply out of step with the reality of labour relations laws across North America."

Again, there is a tremendous amount of opposition to Bill 144.

I would just like to summarize what I believe are the changes that will have the most detrimental impact on people in the province of Ontario.

I think first and foremost is the elimination of a worker's fundamental right to a secret ballot vote. Again, the OLRB is going to have the arbitrary power to grant union certification. Of course, the government has also reintroduced the card-based certification system, and I think that probably is the one area where workers are the big, big losers.

The other area of concern is the ability of the OLRB, under this legislation, to arbitrarily grant union certification when an employer is deemed to be in violation of labour laws. Again, we just don't know what this means.

Of course, third is the re-establishment of a card-based certificate system for the construction sector.

Again, under this bill, if you have 55% of employees sign cards, automatically you would see a union.

Our party does not support this bill. It turns back the clock about 15 years in labour relations, particularly with the power it's giving to the OLRB, the automatic certification and the elimination of the secret ballot vote. We would encourage the government to seriously consider the advice that they have been given by people who create jobs in Ontario; people who make investments, whether it's in new stores or new businesses, whether it's in traditional manufacturing or in the high-tech sector.

I would ask this government to seriously consider the impact of this bill, because I think it simply further contributes to this province being an unfriendly climate for further job creation. This government has already raised taxes. They have created an unstable energy system. They have lifted the cap on the energy prices. We have a crumbling transportation infrastructure. In light of the mismanagement of the economy that we have seen in the past 18 months, the introduction of this bill will certainly not contribute to stabilization of the economy. It's not going to lead to further investment in this province and it's not going to create new jobs.

I hope and trust that there will be hearings, and I hope that the government will be amenable to making changes and withdrawing parts of the legislation.

1740

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I admire Ms. Witmer's capacity to address this for an hour. I've listened to all of it. I, with no apologies, disagree with every bit of it. She and I come from two very different perspectives when it comes to working women and men and their trade unions and workplaces.

I want to tell you, I look forward to being able to participate in this debate in around 10 minutes' time. Unfortunately, I'll only have around 10 minutes and I'll do

the balance of that hour tomorrow. Of course, my colleague the member from Hamilton East, Ms. Horwath, is here today listening carefully and is a strong trade union supporter.

Look, it's not just a matter of supporting trade unions; it's a matter of supporting working women and men. You can't say you support working women and men unless you support their trade unions too, and, more importantly, not just their trade unions but their right to belong to a trade union, their right to join a trade union, and their right to do so without being victimized by the bad-boss Wal-Marts of North America that will spare no expense to undermine a successful organizing drive.

We see it over and over again. We see it in Quebec, where Wal-Mart will shut down a store before they'll let it be unionized. Wal-Mart will use every tactic that money can buy—and they've got money—to undermine an organizing drive. So by the time it gets to this so-called vote, you're lucky to find a handful of, more often than not, immigrant new Canadian women who aren't and haven't been intimidated, for fear of a loss of their jobs, a loss of their livelihood, a shutdown of the store, into voting contrary to what they believe.

If you believe in trade unions and the right of workers to belong to them, you believe in card certification. That's what New Democrats stand for.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): I'd just like to congratulate our Minister of Labour for having introduced this very important bill. Bill 144 protects the democratic rights of our people. Our government wants to restore fairness and balance to the labour relations system, improve workplace relations and maintain the stability necessary for a productive economy.

We have consulted. We have consulted with labour groups; we have consulted with the construction industry. But it seems that at the present time, on the official opposition side, they have a different philosophy, because one member says we are not going far enough and the next one is saying that we are going too far. I was listening to the member for Simcoe North, who says that we are not going far enough, and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who says we are going too far. So I think within the caucus they should discuss this a little further.

Let me tell you, it's true: When I look at Wal-Mart and what has happened in the Saguenay area, really, when those big stores come into a small community, it kills all the small operators, and they come in and pay the minimum salary. What good is it for the economy of the community? They don't have enough money to buy new furniture; just enough money to pay their rent and their groceries, and there's a very limited number of groceries they can buy.

With this bill, I think we would reinstate the fairness and balance of the economy.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): During an attempt to unionize a particular business, plant, store or whatever it is, there are a number of things

that go on that can be termed fair or unfair in terms of labour practices. Humans are humans, unions are unions, businesses are businesses, and I don't trust one side or the other in terms of what might happen during a unionization drive; nor do I trust what goes on in a decertification drive. Therefore, as in the Wal-Mart case in Saguenay, Quebec, where the union was approved by a card process and a decision by the Quebec labour board, I don't trust any of it. That's why I support, in the final analysis, a secret ballot which takes place so that intimidation from one side or the other side can be put aside, and the employee, sitting down for his or her own sake, can make a decision whether they want a union to represent their interests or not.

The arguments about who's right, who's the bad guy, whether it's the union side or the business side, we can't determine in this Legislature. We know that people get over-enthusiastic about their causes, whether they're the union or they're the business side. We know that's human nature. We know it will happen. So there's only one way to determine, in the final analysis, and that's a secret ballot. That's why I am against this bill: This bill takes away the democratic rights of workers to decide whether they want a union or they don't want a union.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to rise and comment on the debate provided by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I have to say that, from my perspective, I don't agree with a lot of the things she raised in this debate, but I do think it's important that we get these things on the table.

What I find really interesting is that yet again the McGuinty Liberals have come forward with a bill that is fatally flawed. It's fatally flawed because, in their rhetoric, it purports to be a bill that brings back fairness and balance. What they never tell you is that maybe it brings back fairness and balance for the few but certainly not for the majority or all the workers in Ontario. That is the fatal flaw in Bill 144. What they consider to be fairness in this bill is exactly the opposite. It basically discriminates against the vast majority of workers in the province and does not allow them to have card certification as a way of having their unions represent them in the workplace.

Unfortunately, the very people who are being discriminated against in the context of Bill 144 are the ones, quite frankly, who most need the kind of protection, support and negotiation in collective bargaining that the trade union movement brings to them and that their union would bring to them. Those, for example, are workers in low-wage jobs, immigrant workers, women workers, the very workers that the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell was talking about when he talked about the Wal-Mart store. Unfortunately, he would be surprised to find out that Bill 144 does not provide the fairness and necessity those workers need to be represented by a trade union because it wouldn't provide card certification if those particular Wal-Marts were in Ontario.

It's extremely disappointing. We look forward to at least significant committee debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. You have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Witmer: I thank the Niagara Centre MPP and the members from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Lanark-Carleton and Hamilton East for their comments.

It's evident that we certainly support the right of unions to exist. People need to be given the opportunity to make a decision as to whether or not they join a union. However, I think the point has been well made today that in the past, when there has not been a secret ballot vote, there has always been the potential for harassment and intimidation. Regrettably, that can be by an employer, it can be by a colleague, it can be by a union organizer. The reality is that people sometimes are weak and simply do not have the power or the ability to say no. They are put in a position where they sign a union card because they simply don't have the strength and fear repercussions, whether from an employer or, as I say, a peer or a union organizer.

What I believe we are most opposed to is the stripping away of a worker's democratic right to a secret ballot vote to determine whether or not they wish to join a union. Also, the minister needs to recognize that, despite what he says in the introduction of his bill, that this is going to encourage economic prosperity, I think the business community has pointed out that it will have a negative consequence on the environment in this province.

1750

Mr. Dunlop: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: About an hour and a half ago I gave you a written statement on a point of privilege that I thought should be addressed by the Speaker of the House. I'll just take a moment of your time, because I don't want to cut too much into Mr. Kormos's time.

Under standing order 21(a), "Privileges are the rights enjoyed by the House collectively and by the members of the House individually conferred by the Legislative Assembly Act and other statutes, or by practice, precedent, usage and custom."

What I want to outline to you today very briefly is the fact that last week, on March 22, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services made an announcement in the amount of \$30 million.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: This has nothing to do with my bill.

Mr. Dunlop: It's a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

It affected fire departments throughout the province of Ontario. I certainly have no problem with the announcement. I believe some of the fire departments need some of the money for training and equipment. However, I have a lot of concerns with the way the announcement was done. The information regarding the amounts given to individual fire departments was only given to government members. None of the NDP members or Progressive Conservative members received any of the

information. In fact, we had to finally go to individual Liberal members to find out what the amounts were. The minister's office refused calls from our office, and e-mails were not returned as well. We know as a fact that the ministry staff were told that the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic members were not to receive that information.

I believe that's a custom and a tradition in this House. It's taxpayers' dollars, money that's distributed to regions across the province. It's not the Liberal Party's money; it's not the government's money. The money belongs to the taxpayers of the province, and everyone has a right to have that information if it's available to their riding. Certainly, it has not been the case with other ministries. I know the Ministry of Health and some of the other ones have been quite good about getting information out to us.

I'm asking you, Mr. Speaker, to rule on this particular action by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I believe it was wrong, and I believe, as a result of that, there should be a ruling from

the Speaker's office. Actually, I would hope that he would have to apologize to the House for his actions in that particular incident.

The Acting Speaker: By way of response to the member for Simcoe North, I'm not in a position to make a ruling on that issue at this time, but I'm sure the issue will be considered and you will receive a response in due course.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I accept your ruling, not just because I have to but because I agree with you. Could we get an assurance that that ruling would come from you, since you were the one who heard the point of privilege and received the advance notice?

The Acting Speaker: No, I won't be making that ruling at this time, I say to the member for Nepean-Carleton.

It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 30 March 2005

Mercredi 30 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 mars 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): You may have visited the 100 or so septic trucks, tractor-trailers and portable toilets—I can hear the horns honking outside right now on Queen's Park Circle—and if you haven't, I invite you to come down to rural Ontario or go to northern Ontario, where these haulers are spinning their wheels as the options to dump their loads continue to dwindle. Like the visual display outside today, many of these hard-working haulers feel that they are going in circles with this government while the pile of potential problems piles up.

There are over two million septic tanks in Ontario. Sewage haulers solve a lot of our problems, but they have run out of options. They don't send this stuff to the moon. It doesn't just disappear. It has to go somewhere. It's quite simple: Rural Ontario produces waste, just as urban Ontario does. Rural waste must be safely disposed of, as does that in the city.

Members of OASIS, the group outside today, have a strong reputation for high-quality service. It's high time this government showed some leadership. Don't force the rural haulers to truck down here to get your attention. They don't need a study; they need some action today. The question is, will this government give OASIS somewhere to drop their loads, or will it continue to ignore rural and northern Ontario?

I used the washroom today. I thank the sewage industry. I will ask you to greet members of OASIS, as they are around Queen's Park today.

KNIGHTS TABLE

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge and commend an organization and a group of volunteers who have worked tirelessly to help those less fortunate in my riding of Brampton West–Mississauga.

In October of last year, I stood here in this House pleading on behalf of the Knights Table, for those in the community to do whatever they could to assist in finding this kitchen a new home nearby. The Knights Table was

being forced out of their downtown Brampton location, where they had served millions of meals for over 10 years. It seemed that every door was being slammed shut. The Table was being forced out: forced out of supporting and helping children and adults much less privileged than us.

Thankfully, a compromise was reached and they were able to remain at their location until the end of last year. After seemingly endless negotiations, a new permanent and nearby location was found for the Knights Table. Through the work of Nilda Patey, the executive director of Knights Table, and her army of deeply committed volunteers, they were open and ready to serve the community on February 1 of this year. On March 22, the Knights Table held a dinner party in honour of these volunteers, where it was time for us to say thank you for your support during our move, thank you for lending a helping hand and thank you for being you.

If you are ever in the neighbourhood, please stop by. The Knights Table always will be more than a soup kitchen, but a warm, safe and comforting place for friends to gather.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to speak to the excesses of the Minister of Energy's good friend over at Hydro One. Hydro One's executive spending is out of control. First it was the 35% pay raise to Tom Parkinson. Now Parkinson has courtesy flights, thanks to the Ontario taxpayer, to his estate escape on Lake Muskoka.

The minister responsible has been defiant in supporting this ridiculous expenditure. How coincidental. After all, this is the same minister who took a friendly helicopter ride with his good buddy the president of Hydro One in July over the same locale. The minister should know that this personal helicopter ride to and from the cottage at the expense of the taxpayer is simply wrong.

I also sense that there is a growing rift at the cabinet table. While the minister says, "These things are always difficult to explain to people," his boss, the Premier, was much more resolute when he said he thought there were "better uses of public money." I agree with the Premier on this one. Clearly the Premier and his minister aren't reading from the same flight plan. Either the minister is asleep at the switch or he is the pilot of this gravy helicopter ride.

It is clear that the ratepayer is the one who is going to pick up the cost of this gross hypocrisy, above and beyond the growing rates that are about to start on April 1. Be prepared for more reckless control by the Minister of Energy.

HAMILTON DISTRICT HEALTH COUNCIL

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Tomorrow, March 31, marks the end of an era in quality community-based health care planning. It will be a sad day on Thursday, when Hamilton District Health Council closes its doors one final time following a long legacy of providing valued community service. Hamilton joins 17 other district health councils across Ontario terminated by the McGuinty Liberals.

As of April 1, 2005, costly local health integration networks, LHINs, headed by high-priced CEOs, will be responsible for the planning and administering of local health care programs and services. I want to publicly thank the hard-working and dedicated members and staff of the Hamilton District Health Council—not just the current 19-member council, but all past members who as citizens, municipal representatives and health care providers contributed their talent, skill, expertise and unparalleled knowledge of our community.

The Hamilton DHC was our authoritative local voice in health planning. Its members fostered partnerships, worked with stakeholders and stood as our community leaders in support of a responsive health system. On behalf of all of Hamilton, I extend appreciation to the current council members. Thank you also to the staff of the Hamilton DHC, under the able leadership for very many years of Ms. Marion Emo.

It will be a rocky transition from the DHCs to the LHINs. Quite frankly, I'm very concerned that doctors, health care providers and ordinary citizens are shaking their heads over the McGuinty Liberal government's dismal health care planning process. Showing great volunteers the door, tearing down DHCs and leaving a big, gaping hole in service doesn't sound like a plan for improving health care delivery at the community level.

1340

TRY RECYCLING

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): On February 25, I toured the local business in my riding called Try Recycling. I was pleased to have the Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, and the member from London North Centre, Deb Matthews, accompany me on the tour.

Try Recycling is located on Clarke Road. They have been in business for 14 years. They employ 25 full-time employees, and during the summer they hire additional staff. This company takes materials such as yard waste, clean wood, clean asphalt and reinforced concrete left over from construction or renovation sites and processes

them into material that is sold to business and industry for use in finished products.

Here are some facts about Try Recycling. They recycled and reused 98% of material brought to their facilities, recovered enough metal to build 5,250 cars, recycled enough construction material to build a 30-storey building, recycled enough wood to save 150 acres of virgin forest and recycled enough concrete to fill 9,000 cement trucks.

This year, the London Chamber of Commerce nominated Try Recycling for a business achievement award. I am proud to have Try Recycling located in my riding, a company not only employing people and making a profit, but helping to protect our environment for future generations.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It was only five short months ago that almost 60% of Ontario's physicians put a vote of non-confidence in this McGuinty government and in their pathetic offer to physicians. The doctors rejected the deal because they wanted to send a message to the Liberal government, which made the health care crisis in the first place.

In the last deal, there was no plan to attract or retain new doctors. There was no plan to address wait-lists or to improve services. All there was was a strategy that tried to bribe doctors to prescribe fewer medications to the frail, the elderly and the disabled.

The November vote of non-confidence in this minister's abilities and the McGuinty government's malformation agenda shamed the government into going back to the table after the John Tory Conservatives demanded answers. But in the months since the first deal was rebuffed, what costs have been incurred? What costs have the taxpayers paid? There is still no public costing of this deal.

The government that insulted, the government that maligned, the government that tried to beat up physicians in Ontario still won't tell hard-working taxpayers in Ontario how much they've spent on this deal. One physician is quoted as saying that physicians were able to get a \$500-million sweetener added to the deal after the McGuinty government said they wouldn't go back to the table. They call this Premier "Premier Blinky," because he keeps drawing a line in the sand and then erasing it and backing down.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): We're shining some light on real heroes, the firefighters in all our communities. We're providing funding for the first time in 20 years. Ontario firefighters are receiving \$30 million as a one-time Ontario fire service training grant, distributed to municipalities throughout Ontario.

The people of Windsor-Essex directly benefit from this funding. Essex county's squads, and Windsor's, will

receive \$960,000—\$90,000 each for Amherstburg, Essex, Lakeshore, LaSalle, Leamington and Tecumseh; \$70,000 for Kingsville; and \$50,000 for little old Pelee Island. Windsor will receive \$300,000.

It's been a long time since our firefighters have received the support they deserve. This is for the men and women who work day and night to protect us when we are most vulnerable. They are at the front lines of our communities, ensuring our safety and peace of mind.

I would like to thank Minister Kwinter for his unwavering support of our firefighters and his dedication to rural needs. Ontario fire marshal Bernard Moyle has said that the funding "provides fire services with the flexibility to tailor the funding for local needs so that they may continue to deliver outstanding service to the people of this province."

I'm pleased that we've made fire service training funding available to our local firefighters. They are on the front lines, protecting our communities from disaster, and they deserve every ounce of that protection.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): We've talked a lot about the farming crisis in this House and about grain and oilseed farmers. They've been hit hard across this country because of low commodity prices, and they came here from across the province earlier this month to express their needs.

I'm proud to say that yesterday the Minister of Agriculture and the McGuinty government announced a \$79-million investment in the market revenue program to help these farmers deal with the current crisis. Our government is confident that the agricultural funding announced yesterday will deliver meaningful change and will help to make a lasting impact on our farms and in our communities.

As a farmer and a long-time resident of rural Ontario, I know first-hand the challenges of keeping a farm profitable, and of the very hard work that goes into running a farm and the desire to leave something of value for our children. It is a struggle to be a farmer, but the rewards in farming cannot be measured in just dollars and cents.

We are also glad that the federal government announced funding for the agricultural industry yesterday, in particular \$480 million for the grain and oilseed sector. In light of the crisis our farmers are facing and the fact that there is a \$23-billion gap in what Ontario gives to the federal government versus what we get back, I call on the federal government to give Ontario its fair share and invest \$120 million in Ontario's grain and oilseed farmers.

Like all Ontarians, farmers are proud Canadians and, like the farmers, we know that a strong Ontario is critical to a stronger Canada. So it is important that the federal government support a strong Ontario for a stronger Canada.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I would like to take this opportunity to give a little bit of advice to the federal members of Parliament representing Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Parsons: No heckling.

The advice is very simple: Smarten up. You were elected to advocate for the people of Ontario in Ottawa, not the other way around. You know how strong Ontario is and how much we contribute to this country, and we want to keep doing so. But your federal government keeps \$23 billion more of our citizens' money than it provides in services to them. This is wrong. It jeopardizes the very things that we as Canadians value, and you know it.

When you boast of your budget surpluses, you must remember that that money came out of the pockets of your constituents—money they need for such essentials as health care, education, seniors and farming.

Ontarians elected you to stand up for them. Don't forget your roots: where you came from, who elected you and why you're there. If you won't fight for your constituents here in Ontario, who will? Canada is strong only if Ontario is strong. Join with us in the fight for fairness in the treatment of your province. Our citizens expect nothing less.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 30, 2005, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 56.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to tell you that the McGuinty government is making history, not only in Ontario's electricity sector but in the evolution of Canada's energy landscape. Through our efforts to replace coal-fired generation with cleaner sources of energy, to restructure Ontario's electricity sector to meet our long-term supply needs and to work with other provinces to enhance our transmission infrastructure, the McGuinty government will leave its mark as a government that got the energy issues right.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that we're embarking on a new and exciting chapter. Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are setting the pace as the only jurisdiction in North America that is committed to replacing coal-fired generation with clean, reliable and sustainable power. We're doing this because we want to protect the best interests of Ontarians by reducing harmful emissions and cleaning up the air we breathe.

Our government is interested in maximizing every source of renewable energy that is available to us. We are particularly interested in expanding our supply of hydroelectric power, such as the power that has been generated from Niagara Falls since 1905. Through our request for proposals for renewable power and through the efforts of my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources, we are removing barriers to achieving Ontario's potential for additional water power in our province. Why? Because it's clean, affordable, sustainable and reliable. The good news is, there is an abundance of clean, untapped hydroelectric potential not only in our province but all across Canada to help us meet our long-term supply needs. Newfoundland and Labrador has an abundant supply of hydroelectric potential at the lower Churchill River. In fact, Gull Island and Muskrat Falls on the lower Churchill represent the most economic undeveloped hydro sites in all of North America.

That's why I'm pleased to announce today a joint proposal with Hydro-Québec to support Newfoundland and Labrador in the development of a major hydroelectric generation project at the lower Churchill River in Labrador. The proposed project would yield 2,824 megawatts of clean, affordable and sustainable electricity, enough to power almost two million homes. I'm excited about this partnership and the benefits it could bring to Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This initiative demonstrates how our government is working with our neighbours to find mutually beneficial solutions to meet our long-term energy supply needs.

The joint proposal would see Ontario and Quebec work with Newfoundland and Labrador to develop the 2,000-megawatt Gull Island site in Labrador and an additional 824 megawatts at Muskrat Falls. Ontario would receive one third of the total output of the project. If our proposal is accepted, Ontario would benefit from an additional 670 megawatts of reliable and affordable power from the Gull Island site and an additional 275 megawatts from Muskrat Falls. Combined, that is equivalent to the annual electricity requirements of over 550,000 homes.

Our proposal will ensure billions of dollars in construction activity as well as significant and perpetual direct resource benefits to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We believe that our proposal includes options that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will find attractive, and we look forward to working with them to find a solution that maximizes benefits to all of our provinces. And because hydroelectric power is among the most affordable sources of power, we are hopeful that this agreement would allow Ontario access to an affordable power source over a very long period of time, which will help stabilize long-term electricity prices in our province.

Importantly, as part of our partnership with Hydro-Québec, we would also agree to advance the construction of a 1,250-megawatt interconnection between Ontario and Quebec, which will be in service by 2009. It will provide Ontario with greater access to power from Quebec at a time when Quebec is adding significant capacity. It's important to announce that this will be our first real inter-tie with Quebec and another link in the east-west grid that Dalton McGuinty and this government are bringing to bear.

In addition, Hydro-Québec has indicated a willingness to provide Ontario with 670 megawatts of power by 2011, which is representative of Ontario's share of Gull Island's expected power flows. If successful, this proposal would be a major step in enhancing trade and interprovincial relations between Ontario and Quebec as we take a lead role in working co-operatively with our neighbouring provinces for the benefit of all of Canada.

We look forward to updating you further on this proposal as the process in Newfoundland and Labrador develops. In the meantime, we are also working with Manitoba, our neighbour to the west, to enhance transmission interconnections and bring even more clean hydroelectric power to our province. In fact, we are actively studying a proposed hydroelectric project in northern Manitoba and a transmission line that would bring 1,500 megawatts of clean hydroelectric power to our province, enough to fuel over one million homes.

I firmly believe that enhancing transmission inter-ties between Ontario and our neighbours would strengthen interprovincial relationships and trade, enhance our energy security, stimulate economic development, lessen our reliance on fossil generation and reduce greenhouse gases. Not the least, it would help our First Nations share in the prosperity of southern Ontario.

As we move forward to replace coal-fired generation—we buy 80% of our coal from the United States; why shouldn't we buy cleaner, more reliable, sustainable power from other Canadians? That makes sense. That makes the most sense. Hydroelectric power is a zero-emission source of electricity. So the more hydroelectric power we have, the cleaner our air will be, now and for generations to come.

That is the legacy this government will leave: We will close our coal plants and replace them with cleaner, greener, reliable electricity at a cheaper cost in the long term. That's in everyone's interest. We're proud, as a government, to begin this process with Quebec and Newfoundland.

MUNICIPAL FIRE SERVICES

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Strong, safe communities are one of the McGuinty government's top priorities. Every day, firefighters across Ontario risk their lives to keep our communities safe. This will always be a job full of risks, and Ontario firefighters know this, yet they put their lives on the line to keep the rest of us safe. But we can do our part to help reduce those risks.

Last week, in the first such initiative in more than 20 years, I announced direct funding for municipal fire services. While the grant is unconditional, we expect that fire services will use the funds to improve training and provide new equipment. This new funding will have a direct impact on improving the safety of Ontarians.

Firefighters need to have the training and equipment to do their jobs as safely as possible, whether they're responding to a house fire or a car accident. We are investing \$30 million in the Ontario fire service grant. The grant is being distributed this week to 385 municipal fire departments to help them meet training needs and buy new equipment.

We recognize that in the current fiscal environment and with increasing demands on emergency response services, some municipalities need extra support to keep providing high-quality fire protection services. Rural and small communities, in particular, face this challenge because they have a lower property and business tax base. Seventy-one per cent of the Ontario fire service grants is going to municipalities with populations of 50,000 or less. These municipalities have told us they need help, and we are providing it. But we also know that larger fire departments operate under some of these same pressures. This grant will improve firefighting in all communities.

There are more than 10,000 full-time, 113 part-time and almost 18,000 volunteer firefighters in Ontario. Ninety-five per cent of fire departments in Ontario are volunteer or have a volunteer component. The office of the fire marshal will work with municipalities and fire chiefs across the province to identify their training needs and priorities.

1400

The Ontario fire service grant can also be used for the purchase of firefighting equipment, to improve firefighter safety or for public education and fire prevention. Life-saving equipment, like thermal imaging devices, helps firefighters locate and rescue fire victims through dense smoke. With the Ontario fire service grant, fire services will be able to purchase vital equipment.

We look forward to working with the municipalities and our other partners to ensure that Ontarians and firefighters are kept safe. We will work closely with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario. Our partners welcome the Ontario fire service grant, and many fire chiefs across the province have expressed their support. We will continue to build on our relationship with fire chiefs and our municipal partners to reduce the risks faced by the valiant men and women in the firefighting profession.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to respond today to the statement by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

First of all, I wanted to point out that I was somewhat surprised by this budget announcement on March 22. It was a \$30-million announcement, following an announcement just previously that week that the government had found itself with a ballooning deficit of almost \$7 billion—and that's with an additional \$7 billion in revenues. That's somewhat ironic, in the fact that in the 2003-04 budget, the Eves government announced \$40 million for fire departments as well as a helicopter, and this government found itself not able to follow that direction, and of course they cancelled the helicopter and cancelled the \$40 million. That being said—we know that this government is not fiscally responsible—it is good to see money going to small and rural fire departments in particular.

What I was disappointed with was the way the announcement was made. I've made this statement already in this House. Quite frankly, the Liberals, the government members, made sure that the fire departments in their ridings knew the exact amount of money, whereas the Progressive Conservative members and the New Democratic Party members didn't get any of that information. I found it difficult that the minister responsible for law and order would pull a stunt like that.

However, that being said, as the critic for community safety, I certainly support any assistance going to the fire departments. I would, though, have liked to see the minister correct the double-hatter issue. This is his way of avoiding dealing with that. He thinks that if they try to train the fire departments, the double-hatter issue will go away. In fact, it hasn't gone away. Most of the small fire departments are still talking about the loss of double-hatters, including a call I had just last night from a fireman who represents two fire departments.

We'll have a lot more to say on this tomorrow with the grow-op operation. We'll be looking forward to that

debate, because that's the first debate that this minister has had take place in this House.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm optimistic in some respects. I would say I'm pleased that the minister recognizes the importance for Canada to have a national grid plan. No one could fault this. But let the viewer be aware that the announcement today is a clear admission that their policy on coal is simply wrong. Their plan to eliminate coal by 2007 will plunge Ontario into darkness. Even in the plan, he knows that he cannot diminish the coal production before 2007. If he admits nothing else today, he is admitting that that is another broken promise.

He should also tell the consumer that the money going into these projects hasn't been announced. But there's only one payer, and that's the person at the end of the wires. The consumers of Ontario, as of April 1, are going to pay more, and into the future they're going to pay even more.

The downside of this is that Ontario, a once strong and once proud province, under this government is now going to be dependent on Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador for their power. We're also going to lose the investment and lose the jobs.

Clearly, they have no plan. In my view, this is an admission today that they have no plan.

Everyone understands that we must have a safe, reliable and affordable source of power. Now we have Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador, and the investments that aren't announced here today are clearly the next shoe to fall on this very difficult policy area in which the minister seems to be floundering. I put this to him today, as a summation of this announcement on our part: Tell the people of Ontario the truth. Are you going to close the Nanticoke plant prior to 2007 and, if you're not, why won't you just tell the people of Ontario the truth? What they want is certainty and confidence in a government that can manage a very important economic file.

At the end of the day, the consumer, under this government, has undertaken two increases in the price at their meter at home. The announcement today is that there are going to be more, and the investment is going to be in Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec and Manitoba. The workers and the investors of Ontario are going to be left paying the bill.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to respond to yet another exercise in media spin by the Minister of Energy, and I want to place this in context. The McGuinty government promised that they were going to close all the coal-fired stations by 2007. They also promised that they were going to maintain hydroelectricity rates at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. People across Ontario want to see a plan to do these things.

Did we hear a plan today for the closing of the Lambton coal-fired station? No. Did we hear a plan for

the closing of the Nanticoke coal-fired station? No. Did we hear a plan to keep electricity rates anywhere near the 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour that was promised? No. That went by the wayside a long time ago. Is there any kind of plan here at all? No. Is there even an agreement? No. Is there even an agreement to sign a future agreement? No. What we got was a proposal, and it was obvious from watching the press conference that it was cooked up on the back of an envelope. The minister couldn't even explain his own proposal. He had to call officials in to do it.

This so-called proposal will only provide Ontario with 800 megawatts of electricity some time after 2011, but the promise is to close the Lambton and Nanticoke coal-fired stations by 2007. No plan. This is once again the McGuinty government strategy: When you're in trouble and you don't have a plan, hold another press conference, run out the media spin and hope that somebody will fall for it. As I say, there's no plan here. There's no agreement on power provision here. There's not even an agreement to be signed at some future date. It's simply a proposal.

Let me tell you what people wanted to hear. In northern Ontario, where paper mill after paper mill after pulp mill after pulp mill is either being closed or is slated for closure, they wanted to hear something from the McGuinty government that recognizes that the northern Ontario economy is very electricity intensive, and that paper mills, pulp mills and sawmills cannot afford 6.3 cents or 7 cents a kilowatt hour, which is what this government is now forcing them to pay.

Let me give you some examples. This is from Abitibi. I know Abitibi presented this to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Energy. They are very clear. The paper mill in Kenora, looking at a total of 382 jobs, is under review for closure. Why? Because electricity rates are too high. The Abitibi paper mill in Thunder Bay—a total of 382 jobs—is under review for closure. Why? Because electricity rates are too high. The pulp mill in Terrace Bay is closed: 150 workers out of work. When you talk to management, what was the biggest issue? The biggest issue was the cost of power. Go to the Tembec mill in Kapuskasing and talk to them—800 jobs. What are they worried about? The price of electricity. Go to the St. Mary's paper mill in Sault Ste. Marie—300 jobs. What are they worried about? The price of electricity. They can't afford what the McGuinty government is doing to them.

Was there any announcement here today to respond to those communities where literally thousands of jobs are at risk? No. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

1410

Let us get to the coal: 7,500 megawatts will have to be replaced. Was there any mention here of 7,500 megawatts? No. This might deliver 800 megawatts sometime after 2011 if all the stars line up and if the government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the government of Quebec agree.

This wasn't the announcement of a plan today. This wasn't the announcement of a strategy today. This is a government that has no plan but is desperate to cover up the fact that they have no plan with more media spin.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I draw the attention of the members to the east gallery: a former member, Murad Velshi from Don Mills in the 34th Parliament. Let's welcome him.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I also have a very delightful announcement here. I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving the first session of the 38th Parliament: Julie Banks from Oshawa, Zoé Campbell from Ottawa South, Nicole Cliteur from Algoma-Manitoulin, Ryan Cowieson from Scarborough East, Scott Dickson from Simcoe-Grey, Peter Entecott from York North, Michael Flemming from Kitchener-Waterloo, Peter Green from Parkdale-High Park, Jessica Jepp from St. Paul's, Alex Kellermann from Mississauga South, Amanda Kelly from Halton, Ryan Ko from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Jean-Olivier Lambert from Timmins-James Bay, Stephaine Lawrence from Whitby-Ajax, Jean Murray from Kitchener-Waterloo, Alexandre Nanoff from Eglinton-Lawrence, Alexandra Schwabe from Sudbury, Sameer Sethi from Brampton West-Mississauga, Jessica Simoneau from Niagara Centre and Nevetha Yogarajah from York South-Weston. Let's welcome them in the usual manner.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Since the Premier was unable to answer this simple question yesterday, I thought I would try to pose it to you. As the minister responsible, could you give us your best estimate as to what the deficit is going to be for this current year just now concluded?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm glad to see that the Leader of the Opposition is repeating his questions. I can simply tell him that he'll get to know, as he spends more time around this Parliament, that every quarter the government of Ontario publishes its Ontario Finances report. If my friend will simply refer to the financial report that we published in February, he will see that right there on page 1 we show that the province is currently planning for a deficit of \$6 billion. He will also know that, whether it's a government or a business, neither a government nor a business actually puts up-to-

date, daily re-estimates of finances. So I simply invite him to remain in this Parliament and to be here for the presentation of the budget, where we'll give a final report on our financial circumstances for 2004-05, as well as present a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Mr. Tory: Well, we've gone from the Comedy Channel yesterday to the Mystery Channel today. The Minister of Finance does not need to tell me too much about how often business puts out its numbers, but I can tell you right now, it is shocking to me that two days before the end of the fiscal year, you are unwilling to tell the people your best estimate—as of now, not as of some report you put out several months ago—as to what the deficit is going to be.

I know full well, because I've been around here long enough, that you are having very regular briefings with your officials about the state of the deficit. Any reasonable person should expect that you have had at least one of those briefings in 2005, in this year, and you should be prepared to tell the people of Ontario, when it's their money, what the deficit is going to be for this year. Will you tell us what the deficit is going to be for this year, your best estimate as of now?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I simply tell the new Leader of the Opposition, of the Progressive Conservative Party, that he shouldn't sacrifice his credibility so early in his term in this Parliament. Have I been meeting with officials from the Ministry of Finance, dealing with last year and this year? Every day, sir, for hours and hours, in preparation for our upcoming budget.

But I simply want to tell him—I'm asking him to go back to his days as CEO of Rogers Communications. I don't know of one occasion when he regularly reported to his shareholders on a day-to-day basis what the profit for any particular year was, or in his case the losses on a daily basis. I simply tell him that the procedure in this Parliament is to report quarterly on financial performance—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: If I had gone to a meeting, when I was asked a simple question like that, and given the kind of answer you've given today, I would have lost my job.

The fact of the matter is, we are not dealing here with a company; we are dealing here with the finances of the province of Ontario. We are dealing here with money that is not your money. It's the people's money, and they have the right to know, any given day they want to know, when we ask on their behalf, "What is your best estimate?" Are you willing, or do you just not know what your best estimate is of the deficit of the province of Ontario for the year ending right now, today? No excuses. What's the answer?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: The Leader of the Opposition speaks about losing his job. I want to remind my friend that his predecessors, that government, in October 2003, days before the people voted, put out a financial report which predicted a zero deficit. Within several weeks, the former Provincial Auditor said that the deficit, far from

being zero, was some \$5.6 billion. That's the mess we inherited. So we are methodically, diligently and with discipline overcoming all of the mess that your party left when it was in government.

1420

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I was wrong. It wasn't the Mystery Channel; it was the Scream Channel.

My second question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. On behalf of the hundreds of farmers in my constituency and indeed on behalf of farmers across Ontario, can you tell this House specifically how farmers can access the funds that you announced yesterday?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I take this opportunity to welcome the member to the House. I look forward to working with him.

It's very simple, and perhaps, hopefully, you've now learned what a heifer is. It's my understanding you've had some difficulties in dealing with agricultural issues on the other side. It's very simple, and I would encourage you to talk to your agriculture critic.

We have in place in this province the market revenue insurance program. The MRI program has been in place for a number of years. Based on the data that has been received for the 2004 crop year and the \$88 million that we have flowed already, the \$79 million that's going to flow is going to flow through the market revenue insurance program, and those cheques should be in the mail within the next two to three weeks.

Mr. Tory: The minister, of course, didn't answer the question. We called the number that you referenced at your news conference yesterday. We called it this morning. Your announcement said yesterday that you would flow the money to the farmers from the 2003 and 2004 crop seasons. When we phoned, we were told by your ministry officials that the money you announced is to pay for problems that occurred with the crops last year and was not going to help anyone with the problems they might have this year. Worse still, they didn't even know how to deal with someone who might be a new client for the ministry in this area.

What the farmers need—the farmers in my riding and in the ridings of many other members of this House—is a commitment from you that the crop they're being asked to plant this year is going to receive some support. That commitment, of course, just doesn't exist. This isn't a good start, but I will ask the minister this: Will you outline a support program for farmers for this year before they put the seeds in the ground in the planting season?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I would welcome the member to come over to the ministry office for a detailed briefing as to the programs that we do offer to farmers in this province. If there is a specific individual, a farmer, who is having difficulty accessing any services that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food provides, please do the responsible thing: Have that individual farmer sign a

waiver form, as we do in all of our offices, and contact my MPP liaison.

The dollars that we are flowing are very clear. This is in support of the dramatic decrease in commodity prices that occurred in the 2004 year. We have flowed \$88 million. We've announced an additional \$79 million. That's \$167 million that is flowing in support of farmers to deal with the crisis that they're facing coming out of the 2004 crop year. Those dollars will assist them to be in a position to plant their 2005 crops. We have undertaken a comprehensive review of our business risk management programs that's going to lead to where we go forward with safety nets for this problem.

Mr. Tory: The minister full knows that a lot of that money in respect to last year, if he gets it out in the three weeks he's promised, will go to pay down bank loans that people had to take out to stay in business last year.

Perhaps even more disturbing than your being contradicted by your own officials is the word that the province of Ontario was excluded from top-level discussions that took place between the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premiers of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

As you've said many times in this House, agriculture is the second-largest industry in this province. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture said yesterday that they were disturbed about the fact that your government was not talking to the other governments in Canada; there wasn't the kind of coordination we'd expect on something like this. Minister, why did you not work with the government of Canada before your announcement yesterday and before theirs to make these announcements work together for farmers in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I'm really disappointed that the honourable Leader of the Opposition is so pessimistic about our farmers in this province. We're working to ensure that farming is viable, that our farmers produce safe, high-quality food. I would challenge the member to perhaps pick up the phone and call the minister, because I spoke with the federal agriculture minister on Monday evening, prior to the announcement yesterday.

As well, I was on a conference call yesterday with all the provincial ministers, talking about where we go moving forward, because the federal government, quite honestly, acted unilaterally in this decision without proper consultation with the province. So we had a conference call of the provincial agriculture ministers yesterday. We'll be meeting on April 9 in Ottawa. We met on March 2 and 3. I was outside. I stood beside you at the rally outside. Following that rally, I jumped on a plane and went to Ottawa to present Ontario's case to the federal minister.

So we've been working very hard, and all we've heard is silence and nothing positive and constructive from the opposition in helping our farmers.

PRIMARY CARE REFORM

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. You promised that

your deal with Ontario doctors would help Ontario patients. You said that it would help patients who don't have a doctor find a doctor. You said that it would help those people who were on waiting lists move up on the waiting list. In short, you promised primary care reform. But today what we find is that the doctors, yes, voted for a deal, but it's not a deal that provides primary care reform; it's a deal where most of those primary care reform measures have been put on the shelf. In short, the doctors voted for a deal where you blinked. You opened up the vault, you wrestled the salary figures to the ceiling, but you didn't deliver primary care reform. Minister, when did furious George become Blinky?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Notwithstanding the honourable member's fascination with cartoon characters, I want to make a couple of comments—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, you make it easy for everyone except the one million people in the province of Ontario who today do not have a doctor as a result of the record of those two parties while in government. All the questions that that honourable member might want to ask—all Ontarians must be reminded that, on that fateful day when you were the government in the province of Ontario and sat on your hands while the cabinet decided to close medical schools, you have been the greatest contributor to the problems of health care in the province of Ontario. The deal that we have signed and the evidence of the extent to which primary care reform is alive in the province of Ontario is to be found in the fact that 213 communities across the province have applied for family health teams, our model of primary health care reform.

Mr. Hampton: Not only is furious George blinking, but he has obviously forgotten his history. No medical schools closed in the province of Ontario.

Here's what we find in your deal. You have delayed a series of measures that would have helped ordinary Ontario families who can't find doctors or who are on lengthy waiting lists. You're delaying programs and strategies for seniors' care, palliative care, after-hours care at nursing homes, diabetes care and strategies that would have brought more physicians and more specialists to hard-pressed northern Ontario communities. That's what you've done. You've wrestled the physicians' salaries to the ceiling, but all of those things that you promised in terms of primary care reform, you've put on the shelf.

Minister, you promised primary care reform. Why did you blink when you promised primary care reform?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There's ample evidence in the province of Ontario, found in at least 213 communities which on February 15 submitted applications to be part of our government's model of primary care reform, and that is family health teams. That's well-known to the honourable member and to honourable members in all parties, because communities all across the province of Ontario have asked to be part of an

interdisciplinary method of practice that brings together our doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and dietitians to provide the kind of comprehensive care that is at the heart of our model of primary care. I recommend to the honourable member that he stay tuned because in the days ahead he will see, from this government, movement in the form of hope for community after community in the province of Ontario that was left behind by your government's short-sighted decision to chop our medical schools down.

1430

Mr. Hampton: I invite the Minister of Health to tell us what medical school closed.

This is your record as Minister of Health. Here's the situation: palliative care for seniors, shelved; providing better care for seniors in their homes, shelved; helping people manage their diabetes, shelved; improved funding for specialists in northern Ontario, shelved. All of those things were shelved in this agreement.

But it's more than that. During the election, you decried what you called "wasted health care dollars on tax cuts." What do we find in this agreement? A very lucrative tax cut for physicians, which will allow for all kinds of income splitting and tax avoidance; in fact, tens of millions of dollars of tax avoidance. Can you tell us this, Minister: How does a—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Member from St. Catharines, will you come to order, please.

We'll let the leader of the third party complete his question.

Mr. Hampton: Obviously, Liberal cabinet ministers don't take this issue of better decorum to heart.

My question for the Minister of Health is, after decrying tax cuts during the election, can you tell us how these tax cuts are going to provide patients who don't have a doctor with primary care reform?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The agreement that we've reached with the Ontario Medical Association, supported by 74% of Ontario's doctors, paves the way for enhanced care for the people of the province of Ontario, and all of the work on the part of the honourable member to change that will not, nor can the honourable member escape the very present reality. The present reality is a piece of history, and the history is that when that party was in government, they cut down our capacity to produce a sufficient number of doctors.

On the issue at hand, we have invested the money of Ontarians in an appropriate place. We did it ensuring that we have a competitive environment for our doctors so that we not only keep the doctors that we have, so that we can create an environment where people want to practise medicine in the province of Ontario—for example, by our increase in family residency spots recently—but so that Ontario is back in the business of having doctors in communities where, as a result of those governments when in office, they had been eliminated. We will be attracting doctors back to the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Minister of Health: I simply want to remind the minister that it was a Liberal government in Ottawa under Paul Martin that cut the medicare budgets, and it was a Liberal government in Ottawa that mandated that all provinces reduce the number of physician spaces in medical schools.

But I want to ask you another health question. In September, we learned that you were misspending federal health care dollars earmarked for victims of hepatitis C who contracted the disease through tainted blood. We revealed that your government, despite receiving \$66 million in federal funding, was not using that money for enhanced services for victims of hepatitis C.

Caught red-handed, you quickly formed a committee to look into the matter. But that was eight months ago. Now we find that the committee has never met. There are no terms of reference, no committee members. A whole lot of very sick hepatitis C victims are suffering while you're doing nothing. How do you justify this almost eight months of delay while hepatitis C victims grow sicker and sicker?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: First off, on a matter of history, I recommend that the honourable member take a look at Hansard for May 10, 2000.

Hon Mr Harris: ... I'm just disappointed that you oppose some of the longer-term solutions such as free tuition. I think that's disgraceful, when you're the government that slashed places for doctors in our medical schools."

In response, *Ms. Frances Lankin:* Premier, I'm glad you raised that issue. I guess we should admit that it's true: We agreed with the Mulroney government's directive ... and maybe in hindsight that wasn't the right thing to do."

That is the history of medical school spots in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: On the matter of hepatitis C, the honourable member's assertions are entirely incorrect, and I will not address all of those. In October, we committed to establish a secretariat within the ministry to focus our affairs on hepatitis C. That has been done, and I'll be pleased to give the honourable member more information in the supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister of Health, what you neglect—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Community and Social Services, I've asked you twice already.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Can we get some order so I can hear the leader of the third party put forward his supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: Cabinet is upset by these health care questions. I just want to point out to the minister that, yes, it was the Mulroney government that set the direction. It was, immediately after that, the Liberal

government in Ottawa of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin that implemented it.

But I want to come back to those 3,000 tainted-blood hepatitis C victims in Ontario. They have endured severe physical hardship because of the terrible diseases that they've contracted through no fault of their own. Some 400 of these victims have died since the federal government deal was signed. To this day, the survivors have also endured severe financial hardships. Now they have to endure you spinning a press release saying that you're going to start a committee to investigate this, and the committee hasn't even met in over six months. They don't even have terms of reference. How do you explain that to these victims who have suffered so badly under your watch?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Since the honourable member insists on disbelieving the words of Frances Lankin, let me reread them for the record one more time—and she had been a health minister, I believe: "Premier, I'm glad you raised that issue. I guess we should admit that it's true. We agreed with the Mulroney government's directive, and maybe in hindsight that wasn't the right thing to do."

Some facts on hepatitis C: The federal government's resources were provided to the province of Ontario, and Ontario, like every government—including those governments led by the New Democratic Party—has spent every cent of that federal money enhancing the quality of services for people with hepatitis C in our community.

On the issue at hand, on October 1, we committed to establish a secretariat within the ministry, which we have done, and to establish a committee that would give us further advice. John Plater is the chair—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: We disclosed to you, Minister, all of these hepatitis C victims who were suffering, and your response was to say you were going to set up a committee. But here we are: the victims still suffer; some have died in the interim. Has your committee met? No. Has your committee even terms of reference? No. Has your committee done anything to address the suffering of hepatitis C victims, who are supposed to be receiving this federal money, in terms of enhanced services? Have they received anything? No. This is like your mishandling of the health care file so often. You promise 3,000 new nurses; instead, you lay off almost 1,000 nurses.

What's your answer to those hepatitis C victims who believed that you were actually going to set up a committee to look into their suffering, to look into the injustice and unfairness that happened to them? How do you justify the fact that the committee hasn't even met, it doesn't have any members and it has no terms of reference six months after you promised them?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Fact number one: Every cent of the federal money that has been sent to Ontario for the purpose of assisting people with hepatitis C has been spent on hepatitis C. Secondly, that party while in government worked on a strategic plan for hepatitis C, and they failed to include people who had been infected

and were at risk of being infected. I found that inappropriate, so we sought applications from people interested from around the province: those who are intravenous drug users and represent them, those who are at risk of becoming infected with hepatitis C, those who have been infected.

By February 15, we had applications come forward. They have been narrowed down. I signed the letters last night. The committee is coming to life under the very able leadership of John Plater. That committee, like the one we have on the AIDS advisory, is one that I will meet with, that I will work with and that we will take advice and direction from, because we believe fundamentally that a strategic plan for addressing hepatitis C must involve those people who have been infected and are at risk of further infection.

1440

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I wonder if the minister would release the entire list of developers and lobbyists that he or his political staff met with concerning the greenbelt since it was announced December 18, 2003.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Let me once again say that this government is extremely proud of our greenbelt. We added a million acres to green space protection in the greater Toronto area. Now, I know that party over there is not in favour of the greenbelt. They would like to see it paved over. They would like to see strip malls. It would be interesting to see where the leader, Mr. Tory, stands on that as well. It would be very interesting to see, because I believe he gives one story inside Toronto and another story outside of Toronto as far as where he stands on the greenbelt.

We are very proud of what has been accomplished. I can tell you, we used the best scientific information possible from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture to come up with the greenbelt. We've created a greenbelt that indeed generations can be proud of for many, many years to come.

Mr. Hudak: The minister talked about everything but the question that I asked him—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Over a couple of weeks, I've been hearing comment coming from this side in regard to questions and how they came about. I would rather that members, especially from the government side, refrain from doing that.

The member from Erie–Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: I had a simple question, Minister: Would you kindly release the list of developers and lobbyists that you and your political staff have met with? I know you don't want to answer the question because you do have a credibility issue. You told TVO that you had not

met with any developers, and it was revealed that that did not meet fully with the facts.

On March 8, you also said that you made a decision personally not to meet "with any particular landowners within the greenbelt. I didn't do that. I met with their duly elected councils, with planners." Well, your parliamentary assistant has a different story. On February 10, at committee, he said that the minister "has been very accessible to a number of different individuals," and has given everybody impacted "ample opportunity to make their case to our staff and to the minister directly."

On the same day, the member from Stoney Creek said that the minister "met with people personally in my riding and he's invited municipal leaders and stakeholders to his office to talk about this."

Minister, that doesn't seem to fit with what you said before. Kindly clear this up. Release the list of those you met with.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I can tell you that in developing this greenbelt, which we can be proud of for many generations to come, we have done more consultation through the Greenbelt Task Force, through the consultation that the ministry itself was involved in, through the legislative process etc., than just about any other bill that has ever been brought through this House.

What is interesting is that I have a letter here that talks about a certain fundraiser that's going to take place next week, as a matter of fact. It states that a limited number of people, by invitation only, in order to allow the opportunity to speak to "John" personally, have been invited. When you look at the committee list—

Interjection: How much?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: For \$1,000 each—it includes developers and all sorts of interesting people. Which John are they talking about? They're talking about John Tory, the Leader of the Opposition.

Let me once again say that we are extremely proud of what we've achieved with respect to the greenbelt. It has been endorsed by municipal leaders across this province. It has been endorsed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It has been endorsed by—

The Speaker: Thank you.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Attorney General. Across Ontario, loan sharks are flouting the law while you and your government do nothing. Yesterday in Ottawa, a judge ruled that two payday loan companies were trying to "exploit the vulnerable" by charging criminal rates of interest. The judge says that the victims of these companies don't have to pay, but that's only 34 of the thousands of Ontarians who have been victimized by these scams and these operators. Will you ensure that the thousands of Ontarians who have been charged criminal interest rates get the money back that they lost to these thieves and scofflaws?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I don't want to speak to the particular case that the member raises, because it is still a live case and it still is under appeal. But I am happy to speak to the member about what our government is doing and how the process works.

My involvement arises where the police investigate and determine that it is a matter that should move forward. It is one of those provisions that require the attorney of the day to personally consent to a prosecution. I can tell you, I will take those matters, as they come up, very, very seriously. This particular matter would not fall into this category until and unless the police brought it forward, if at all.

I will also tell you that some time ago, I wrote to Minister Cotler to deal with the lacunae in the Criminal Code; in particular, to review section 347 of the code, which deals with criminal interest rates, to ensure that it covers abusive payday loan practices.

Lastly, I can assure the member that we will use all of the tools within our disposal on the civil side to ensure that those who have lost money as a result of alleged crimes or crimes under civil forfeiture get that money back.

There's more to come in my supplementary.

Mr. Kormos: More of the same old hot air. We're not talking about the rare criminal charge; we're talking about regulating this scofflaw, scoundrel industry. Your government hasn't regulated. Your government has not established a regime wherein victims are protected from this predatory behaviour by these companies. To quote one editorial, "It's difficult to fathom how a provincial government that's prepared to tell us what snacks kids can eat in our schools can stand by while consumers are victimized in apparent contravention of the law."

A judge has ruled that payday lenders are victims of a crime. Will you ensure that the thousands of Ontarians who have been ripped off and charged usurious, criminal interest rates get the money they lost to these companies returned to them? It's as simple as that.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member asked me a question about the particular case, and I want to tell him what the government is doing on this, so I will refer the supplementary to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I would remind the honourable member that this Legislature passed Bill 70. If it wasn't for the foot-dragging and the filibustering of the honourable member from Niagara Centre, who on June 15 wasted House time and on June 22 adjourned debate, resulting in further delay, we would have the legislation proclaimed at this point. The fact of the matter is that it will be proclaimed on July 30. It will allow full disclosure so consumers are fully aware.

I would suggest that the honourable member stand up at the appropriate time and apologize to consumers. His outrage is not to be taken seriously, because he wasted

valuable time when this piece of legislation was introduced last April.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Today at lunchtime, you met with delegates of the septage hauling industry. Like me, you represent rural communities where private septic systems are common and everyone knows that the tank must be pumped out on a regular basis.

The operators I spoke with indicated the industry's desire to help our government fulfill its commitment to ban the practice of spreading untreated septage on land, but they also expressed concern about the lack of septage disposal alternatives if the ban is implemented in the very near future. Can you please update the people of Ontario on what our government is doing to fulfill its commitment to ban the practice of spreading untreated septage on land?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): First of all, I want to thank the septage haulers who came to downtown Toronto today. One of their missions was to bring attention to a very important industry, one that I think is very undervalued in this province. They were able to come here today, meet with me, have a reception and focus attention on an issue of our environment that is very important.

I also want to commend the honourable member. A few months after I was named Minister of the Environment, he invited me to his riding to meet with members of this industry so that I could better understand what their issues were.

I'm happy to say that our government is very committed to working with the industry to build the capacity to ban the spreading of untreated septage in the province of Ontario. We have a lot of work to do. The previous government did not put one red cent into building capacity. Our government is working with municipalities and with this industry to do so.

1450

Mr. Lalonde: I want to thank the minister for her positive response. I am certain all Ontarians will be pleased to hear that our government is not ignoring the challenges of banning the spreading of untreated septage on land. Minister, can you please describe some of the work that our government is doing to address the challenges, and could you also give Ontarians some indication of when they may begin to see progress toward implementing a ban on spreading untreated septage on land?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I think what's important to identify here for the members of the Legislature is that when you ban untreated septage, it means there have to be standards developed for the treatment of it, and that is what we are in the process of doing at the Ministry of the Environment with industry partners and municipalities. We have a pilot project underway in Huron county. As

well, we are working with specialists at the University of Guelph, and they are advising us around what the standards should be for septage. We look forward, before the end of this year, hopefully in the fall, to bringing forward our plan to ban the spreading of untreated septage

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. On March 22, I received a desperate e-mail from Darren Nesbit, a 27-year-old Fabry patient from Sarnia, who said:

“On March 31, 2005, I will lose my treatment and join Bill and his sister in the fight for our lives.... Now that time is here! And where is my Ontario government? They are hiding behind the CDR board.... I tell you and anyone who will listen to me that this health minister and his government are killing us. They have the chance right now to change the thoughts of young, sick Fabry's children. Give these people a chance.” End of the desperate e-mail.

I say to the minister, what is your answer to Darren's desperate plea for help as he fights for his life?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I say to you, honourable member, that Derek is in exactly the situation that you surely must have envisioned when you were a leader in helping to create the Common Drug Review in our country. The reality is that of course we have sympathy for patients who are in a circumstance where they have been offered the opportunity of a hopeful new product, but each product must be measured for its clinical efficacy. This is the long-established practice in Ontario.

The member, in her role as Minister of Health, working with other Ministers of Health, went even further, and that was to create the Common Drug Review. The company wasn't satisfied with their first go-round of the Common Drug Review. They said they wanted to resubmit based on new data, and everybody agreed. That's the current status. My argument to the honourable member in the earlier session of the House this year was that it was inappropriate for the company to suggest that they would cut people off while this review was ongoing, and it's my understanding that the company has made those arrangements and is flowing product for those people to whom it was being provided heretofore. So I believe that's the answer for Derek.

Mrs. Witmer: The minister's answer gives little comfort to Darren or to any other people who have been told they will no longer get treatment. The minister also knows that the CDR was never established to deal with this type of drug product.

But Darren sent me another desperate e-mail yesterday, March 29, and he says: “I, Darren Nesbit, have no more treatments of my drug! How can this government kill its own people? My MPP from Sarnia has done nothing on this issue.... I watch Queen's Park every day, watching and seeing if anyone cares.”

Minister, what do you say to Darren, as he has now been cut off and he fights for his life? Will you now commit to permanent funding for enzyme replacement therapy?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: First and foremost, any drug program operated by any province must establish clinical efficacy before a product can simply be listed on the formulary. With all due respect to the honourable member, for whom I have great respect, she knows this fundamentally from her role as Minister of Health.

The situation, as I have been apprised of it, is that we will work to make sure that this is the circumstance in his situation—and I'm not sure if you said Darren or Derek; I apologize. The company has advised us they are going to continue to ship the product to hospitals. They're also sending invoices along; we think that's inappropriate. The company subsequently asked for a review through the Common Drug Review. They submitted additional data. That review is ongoing. It has been our position for quite some time that it's appropriate that in that circumstance they continue to support people on the compassionate grounds that they did when they first began to offer this product.

So my understanding is that the product is continuing to be available to that patient, but if you want to provide us with that information, we'll make sure that he is being treated as the company has told us that he would be. In the meantime, the Common Drug Review and clinical efficacy will stand, as it must for any province.

LABOUR UNIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Labour: Workers and their friends across this province are denouncing your Bill 144 as not only inadequate but discriminatory, sexist and racist. Yesterday you heard some of that outrage and denunciation here in this chamber. Workers who are mostly women, mostly new Canadians and mostly people of colour, all of them desperately underpaid—surely these workers deserve the same rights of card-based certification that you're prepared to restore to building trades workers. How do you justify this blatant discrimination against so many women, new Canadians, people of colour, visible minorities and underpaid workers?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): Actually, Bill 144 does nothing such as the member outlines. It's a very progressive series of changes that will assist working people, regardless of where they work, in deciding for themselves whether they wish or do not wish to be members of a union. It contains changes, such as remedial certification and interim reinstatement, that apply for the protection of all workers.

This government does not simply wish to delegate its role in protecting the vulnerable, protecting all workers, to any individual or group or organization. That's why we've taken very significant roles in enhancing worker health and safety in all workplaces, in ensuring the minimum wage is increased, in bringing about the end of the

60-hour workweek, in bringing about family medical leave legislation and in ensuring that the employment standards provisions in the province are actually enforced.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, the women providing home care for seniors, the recent immigrants, the new Canadians providing retail services in Wal-Mart stores, surely deserve the very same right to card-based certification as you're prepared to give to workers on a building site. David Peterson, Bill Davis and even Leslie Frost understood this. Only Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and now you and Dalton McGuinty think that this sort of blatant discrimination is acceptable.

Bill 144 discriminates against workers who are mostly women, mostly new Canadians, mostly people of colour and the poorest, lowest-paid workers in this province. You have created two classes of workers. Have you at any point conferred with the Ontario Human Rights Commission to get their opinion on your discriminatory bill?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Once again, the legislation does nothing such as the member outlines. In fact, it is a very progressive series of changes that will assist all workers.

We're determined to ensure that all working people have support in exercising their right to choose whether they wish to be members of a union or do not. That's why there are provisions that apply to all workplaces. Because construction has long been recognized as a separate and distinct part, for the purposes of the act, for the purposes of bargaining regimes, there are some extra steps that we had to take in the context of construction to ensure that that right to choose is effective.

What we won't do is return to the NDP position between 1990 and 1995, where they did everything they could to drive out investment and business from the province, because that means every worker is out of a job. We won't go there.

1500

TRAVEL INDUSTRY COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. We were all shocked two weeks ago when Jetsgo airlines folded so suddenly, leaving travellers stranded in airports across the country. The federal transportation minister's response to this crisis was to suggest that nothing could be done for these customers, effectively leaving them financially stranded as well. Minister, what has our government done to aid consumers in the wake of this unfortunate event?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I thank the honourable member for Etobicoke North for his question. I want to take a moment to thank Michael Pepper. He's the CEO of the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, an agency of my ministry. They acted extremely quickly after the Jetsgo failure to provide hourly information updates to con-

sumers on their Web site. They also worked around the clock to secure alternative travel arrangements for stranded passengers. Our office worked to inform members of provincial Parliament of what was going on and what our compensation fund was all about.

Ontario is a leader when it comes to a compensation fund for end-supplier failures. We have a compensation fund that is in extremely good shape: a \$5-million cap per incident, \$5,000 per individual traveller. Information is available on the TICO Web site, which is www.tico.on.ca, for those individuals who were registered through a travel agency and bought their tickets through those travel agencies.

Mr. Qaadri: Certainly, people are encouraged, but there are many customers who are still waiting for compensation—

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Me.

Mr. Qaadri:—including the MPP from Toronto-Danforth, from a similar situation that occurred over three years ago when Canada 3000 went belly up. Minister, how is our government working with the federal government to ensure that Ontario's travellers never again become victims of poor business practices by airlines like Canada 3000 and Jetsgo?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm sorry that the honourable member from Danforth was not stranded longer at her destination, but I could certainly look into that.

The member raised the situation of Canada 3000, a much more complex issue, because Canada 3000 was, in fact, five separate corporations. TICO advises me that compensation claims will be available within two to six months for Jetsgo customers.

As the member knows, the federal government is responsible for regulating the airline industry. I'm pleased that Minister Lapierre just yesterday indicated that they're willing to look at a national compensation fund and follow Ontario's lead. I look forward to working with the federal government and my other provincial consumer ministers at our consumer ministers conference in Quebec City in June for the better protection of all consumers, not just those in Ontario, but across Canada.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Yesterday you announced a trickle of money for our tobacco farmers and another trickle for our grain and oilseed producers. The tobacco farmers tell us that this just isn't enough. A mere \$35 million cannot offset the burden of increasing higher tobacco taxes. We now discover that the \$79 million going to the grain and oilseed producers is only 40% of their MRI entitlement.

On May 15, 2002, Minister, quoted in Hansard, you said to the minister of the day: "We know that the safety net programs in this country are cost-shared on a 60-40 basis, but you can go beyond; you can do more. Alberta does more; Quebec does more." Minister, these are your words, and you are absolutely correct: You can do more.

Minister, yesterday you announced that our farmers would get 40% of the 2004 benefits. When are you going to do more? Why did the casinos get \$400 million and the oilseed farmers are only worth \$79 million?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): On a number of fronts—and I'll start with tobacco. Perhaps the honourable member may want to talk about other issues.

We've been commended by the University of Guelph for the efforts we have taken to invest in tobacco-growing communities—\$15 million—to assist: "This funding will provide an opportunity for continued partnering, and the university is ready to assist the sector in any way it can to develop innovative solutions for farmers facing challenges." We're investing in community economic development. We're investing \$35 million to assist tobacco growers in transition, as they move to alternative crops. We have approximately 750 tobacco growers in this province who are certainly facing a number of challenges. We made a commitment that we were going to come to the table with \$50 million in support for growers and communities. Promise made; promise kept.

Mr. Hardeman: Mr. Minister, in yesterday's announcements you also indicated that you expected the federal government to stand up and put in \$120 million to make it a complete payment in our market revenue program. I want to go on and quote from the same part of Hansard. This is you speaking: "I know we can hear this rhetoric from the other side," and I want to say that to you now, "Well, the federal government has to do its part." I'll repeat the words that I said yesterday. I will say it again and put this government on notice, to the Minister of Agriculture, that waiting for the feds ... is like waiting for hell to freeze over."

Minister, that's what you said. So are you saying now that the farmers should just wait for hell to freeze over because that's how long it's going to take for you to support them?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I think we've demonstrated very clearly the support that we're giving to agriculture, unlike the previous government: in 1996-97, \$12.8 million cut from the budget; 1997-98, \$31.4 million cut from the budget; 1998-99, \$62.8 million cut from the budget.

We're making significant investments in support of the agricultural industry. Not only did we flow \$88 million for the 2004 market revenue; we've added an additional \$79 million, which comes to a total of \$167 million in support for the grains and oilseeds sector. We've flowed and will be flowing over the next two years \$172 million in support of wedge funding for transition to programs, including an investment of \$35 million in research, including the CAIS program, which for the 2003 crop year will flow in excess of \$180 million in support for Ontario farmers.

I agree with what the member—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. Fort Severn is the most northerly community in Ontario. The school in that First Nations community is closed for public health reasons. Toxic mould is found virtually everywhere in the school building. As a result, children and their families have been forced to move hundreds of kilometres to communities like Sioux Lookout or Thunder Bay just so their children can attend school and get an education. But many in the community can't afford to move to Thunder Bay or Sioux Lookout, so their children are now doing without.

These students are citizens of Ontario. They need access to education. You are the Minister of Education for Ontario. What will you do to help these students receive the education they deserve?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I know the member opposite, and no member of this House, would want to politic with the future of those particular children, who are facing more than the average challenge of students in this province.

The member opposite is fully aware that there's a federal government responsibility and a dispute in that community. What I should say is that the education ministers of Canada recently had a meeting in Toronto and have decided to make aboriginal education, notwithstanding any level of government's ostensible and constitutional responsibility, part of their business; in fact, one of their three top priorities. There is work going on right now with my office and the offices of other education ministers to try to find a way that we can collaborate.

I want to assure the member opposite that we agree there is no excuse for any school-aged student in this province not to be getting a quality education. We will work, and we invite the member opposite to work with us, to find a resolution wherever that is taking place. But we have initiated that through the federal government, through our colleague ministers. We are looking into our responsibilities. It's certainly in our sights, and we will help find a solution for the situation he's describing.

1510

Mr. Hampton: The minister should know that, yes, the federal government has primary responsibility here, but the federal government is dithering on the issue of building a new school. Meanwhile, these students have to follow the Ontario curriculum. They have to pass Ontario literacy tests and other standardized tests, just as children all across Ontario have to pass those tests. They are citizens of Ontario, just as someone who lives in Toronto or Ottawa or Thunder Bay is a citizen of Ontario.

I'm asking you to do two things: Will you get in touch with the federal ministers responsible and say to them, "It's not acceptable in Ontario that children go without an education just because they're aboriginal children"? And, in the interim, will you help those families who've had to move to Thunder Bay or Sioux Lookout in order that

their children can receive an education? Will you do those two simple things, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: Again, I think, at root, one of the most serious challenges we have in this country is the future of aboriginal children. The education system that should be giving them a boost forward—and I think everyone is in agreement—is not doing that to a sufficient degree.

I would say to the member opposite that when it comes to these particular kids, more is required than what you have offered. What you have offered, frankly, isn't about their specific needs. There's a problem to be solved. I ask the member opposite to lend his good offices to untangling the mess in that particular community, and I offer to do the same. They deserve a school in their home community, they deserve not to be dislocated and they deserve not to get ensnared in machinations, whether it's the federal bureaucracy or provincial politicians. So I say to you, member opposite, that these kids need to have a direct involvement from the federal government. That is their responsibility. However, there is a need for third parties, wherever they can come from, to actually roll up their sleeves and help solve this problem.

We are providing additional resources to the communities where First Nations people are receiving an education, and we'll continue to do that.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education. I'm concerned about violence in our schools. A report released last year by the CAMH stated that one third of students were being bullied in the year 2003. This is unacceptable. We must ensure that our schools are safe places for our students. They shouldn't have to worry, when they go to school every day, that they're going to be verbally or physically bullied or abused.

Last December, the minister appointed a special safe schools action team to advise us on the implementation of new measures to protect students. I know the action team has been travelling the province and meeting with parents and students. When can we expect the safe school action team to release its findings?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I think it's something that everybody in this House has some exposure to but still is fairly unremarked on as an ongoing problem. Bullying is probably a fact in every school in this province. It's something that we need to do more about. We have an action team. In fact, the author of the report from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health is on that team. They found so much interest in getting a successful anti-bullying program into every community and every school in this province that they're now holding public hearings and discussions with people, one of which was held this week in Kingston. It's headed up by Liz Sandals, the parliamentary assistant to the

Minister of Community Safety, and it involves some of the best people in this province.

We need to do this. We need to turn the corner on making bullying unacceptable in this province.

Mr. Duguid: Students across Ontario are already experiencing the benefits of the McGuinty government's education reforms, but safe schools are an essential element of a quality education. While we look forward to the action team's recommendations, apart from helping victims of bullying, what other initiatives will the action team examine to ensure that Ontario schools are safe learning places for all our students?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: It's an easy thing to take for granted, the safety of our schools. They are safe, but we need to have constant alertness and vigilance about it. So the safe schools action team has been working since December to make sure we have physically safe spaces; for example, that entranceways in elementary schools are not accessible by intruders who can't be seen by the school staff. They're working on that problem. They are also going to examine some of the incomplete work by the previous government around safe schools. We may stand in this place and think so, but you can't pass a law and suddenly make kids safer. In fact, we need more prevention. We need not to fill the shopping malls with kids who have been expelled or suspended from school. We need to prevent violence, or the incipient acts of bullying and other things that lead to violence, from taking place in the first place.

We'll be reviewing the Safe Schools Act, making changes in programs and reviewing the Robins report as well to make sure we have comprehensive alertness on the safety of children in our schools.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like once again to seek unanimous consent that we call Bill 92 today. I am pleading with the government to call this bill to help AMO, Roger Anderson and Pat Vanini. Would you do that?

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): The member from Nepean–Carleton has asked for unanimous consent. I'm hearing a no.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Again the government seeks unanimous consent to give second and third readings to Bill 92, to assist the member and his desire to help AMO. Will you grant us unanimous consent for second and third readings of Bill 92?

Mr. Baird: We would be more than happy to give second and third readings if we can begin to debate the bill today.

The Speaker: The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent to call second and third readings. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm-related issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions and bureaucratic legislative burdens that fail to understand the value of agriculture as a strategic industry; and

"Whereas the current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province and to develop immediate short-term solutions, such as support for grain and oilseed producers, a workable production insurance program for horticulture and a CAIS program that delivers real income support on a timely basis."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's titled "Save the Southwestern Regional Centre, Home to People with Developmental Disabilities."

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their commitment to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Southwestern Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in their community;

"Whereas closing the Southwestern Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Southwestern Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Southwestern Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities, and to

maintain it as a 'centre of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

1520

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign that.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): This petition has been sent to me by John and Anne Deveau, who live in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a 'centre of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

The petition has been signed by about 393 people. They've asked me to introduce it for them, and I have, and I've affixed my signature to it.

COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition signed by literally thousands of students.

"Whereas Ontario's colleges in 2003-04 served 53% more students than 15 years ago and received 29% less in grant and fee income (after inflation);

"Ontario colleges currently rank 10th out of the 10 provinces in Canada in per student funding; and

"Ontario college students are now paying at least 145% more in tuition fees than in 1990;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government must commit to increasing funding to Ontario's colleges in the 2005 budget to reach the national average by 2007-08."

I have signed this petition myself. I have this box with probably 1,000 petitions, and I have eight other boxes that will all be coming to the table.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government to farm issues; and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions, rising costs for energy and a crushing regulatory burden on farmers; and

"Whereas current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario's farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province that protects our rural way of life, and to work in the short term to alleviate the farm income crisis and listen to the concerns of farmers about the greenbelt."

I support this petition.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from my riding of Mississauga West. It reads as follows:

"Whereas some 20,000 people each year choose to make their home in Mississauga, and the Halton Peel District Health Council capacity study stated that the Credit Valley Hospital should be operating 435 beds by now and 514 beds by 2016; and

"Whereas the Credit Valley bed count has remained constant at 365 beds since its opening in November 1985, even though some 4,800 babies are delivered each year at the Credit Valley Hospital in a facility designed to handle 2,700 births annually; and

"Whereas donors in Mississauga and the regional municipalities served by the Credit Valley Hospital have contributed more than \$41 million of a \$50-million fundraising objective, the most ambitious of any community hospital in the country, to support the construction of an expanded facility to meet the needs of our community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care undertake specific measures to ensure the allocation of capital funds for the construction of A and H block at Credit Valley Hospital to ensure the ongoing acute care needs of the patients and families served by the hospital are met in a timely and professional manner, to reduce wait times for patients in the hospital emergency department and to better serve patients in the community in Halton and Peel regions by reducing severe overcrowding in the labour and delivery suite."

I certainly support this petition. I've affixed my signature to it, and I'm going to ask Alexandre to take it down.

PIT BULL LEGISLATION

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:"

I'm trying to leave time for the member from Simcoe North.

"Whereas Ontario's Attorney General has raised the issue of banning pit bulls;"—it's passed now—"and

"Whereas we, as concerned members of the public, believe the proposed ban is a mistake; and

"Whereas we would rather see legislation requiring all breeds of dogs to be micro-chipped and spayed or neutered within the first year of possession unless being shown or bred under the CKC regulations; and

"Whereas owners should be held responsible for their animals' behaviour at all times, laws must be enforced, and the responsibility for control of dogs should be rightfully placed on dog owners;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take all the necessary steps to re-evaluate and reconsider the pending law to ban pit bulls."

I read this because, after passing the law, this petition still has merit.

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I've got a petition here from the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group on deeming. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board adds Canada pension plan disability benefits to an injured worker's deemed earnings to determine the loss of earnings or future earnings lost; and

"Whereas deducting Canada pension plan disability benefits from loss of earnings or future earnings loss benefits systematically undercompensates injured workers; and

"Whereas the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board bases long-term compensation on deemed earnings that an injured worker is not actually receiving;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act by removing the deeming provisions and providing legislation to base a loss-of-earnings benefit to reflect actual lost earnings;

"To amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to end the deduction of Canada pension plan disability benefits from future economic loss and loss of earnings benefits retroactively."

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth"—Alliston—"is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I've affixed my name.

TUITION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been sent to me by Shailagh Keaney, the vice-president of student issues at Laurentian University. It has 1,492 signatures, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I agree with the call for reduced tuition fees, and I've affixed my signature to this.

1530

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I have a petition here from the Retired Women Teachers of Ontario, St. Catharines branch.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To immediately commit to action and funding to ensure the rights and protection for our citizens living in nursing homes and retirement homes in Ontario."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased—

Interjection: Have you done one already?

Mr. Dunlop: This is my second one, thank you.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I am pleased to sign my name to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'll try to read it as quickly as possible.

"Whereas funding has only been increased to provide better long-term care for people in long-term-care facilities ... but not to any 'self-directed' programs that help seniors live in their own homes (because they either choose to live at home or because they are not suited to live in LTCFs)"—which are the long-term-care facilities—"and

"Whereas the current policy continues to use the community care access centre ... model to look after all long-term care in this province; ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government consider amalgamating the five separate CCACs in Toronto and create one CCAC that will indeed follow its own motto of 'Helping People Live at Home' and, if necessary, create a new self-directed LTC model, perhaps like the one instituted in Germany in 1994 and adopted by other European countries, to allow seniors, our parents and grandparents to live at home, if they choose. This model has proven to be more caring because it is family-based, while eliminating the frustration of bureaucracy and the wasteful and inefficient management of health care funds. Our seniors and the disabled would get what they always wanted: the choice to stay at home."

I submit that to the assembly today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LABOUR RELATIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 29, 2005, on a motion for second reading of Bill 144, An Act to amend certain statutes relating to labour relations / Projet de loi 144, Loi modifiant des lois concernant les relations de travail.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier Essex): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased to speak on behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, but as well on behalf of thousands upon thousands of working women and men who are going to be denied their right to effectively join a trade union if this bill is not amended to ensure that every worker—be he or she in the building trades, on construction sites or working in a Wal-Mart—has the right to establish their union local by way of card-based certification.

Let's understand at the onset that it is our position in the New Democratic Party, and increasingly the position of more and more working women and men and their friends, families, co-workers and neighbours across the province, that this bill is discriminatory, that it is sexist and that this Bill 144 is racist, and I will tell you why.

Let's for a moment, though, reflect on the history of card-based certification, because it is by no means a radical proposition. Indeed, it goes back 50 years, to 1950, when Ontario created its own Labour Relations Act—it included card-based certification; card cert., as abbreviated—through to 1961 under Premier Leslie Frost, a Conservative Premier of this province—no radical, no left-winger, no Bolshevik or anarchist; far from it. Card-based certification was a way in which working women and men, all working women and men in this province, could exercise their right to belong to a trade union.

From 1961 through to 1971, under Premier John Robarts: card-based certification. John Robarts: no radical, no left-winger—far from it—no Bolshevik, no anarchist, no syndicalist, no Wobbly; as conservative as they come. Under the premiership of Conservative John Robarts, card-based certification was the rule of the day for every working woman and man in this province.

Bill Davis graced this House yesterday. Bill Davis was no red, no pinko—far from it—as conservative as they come. Yet under the premiership of Bill Davis, from 1971 through to 1985, card-based certification—card cert.—was the rule of the day. It meant that signing up 55%-plus membership cards in a trade union would effectively form a trade union local.

Frank Miller, whose legacy is, among other thing, his own son sitting in this Legislature, and again, no lefty—far from it—as conservative as they come. Under the premiership of Frank Miller, card-based certification—card cert.—was the order of the day for every working woman and man in this province, not just for some; not just for one group who were entitled to card-based certification yet another group wasn't, never mind the largest number of working women and men in this province. Every worker was entitled to exercise his or her right to join a trade union by virtue of card-based certification.

David Peterson, while Premier of this province—card-based certification was the order of the day.

It wasn't until 1995 and the election of one of the most reactionary governments that this province has seen in many, many, many years, if ever—the Mike Harris revolution and Bill 7; the neo-cons and Bill 7. Among the

first orders of the day for the Harris revolutionaries was the most fundamental all-out attack on workers in this province that has been witnessed in 70 years. Not since the Pinkertons of the 1920s and 1930s have we seen as vicious an attack on workers in this province and their trade unions, and nothing changed under the leadership of Ernie Eves.

People voted for change in 2003 when they elected Dalton McGuinty, and nothing changes even now, because even now, card-based certification, denied workers by Mike Harris and his gang of neo-con revolutionaries and maintained by his successor—worthy or not, but I'm sure liked by so many—Ernie Eves, is now a tradition that's being sustained by Dalton McGuinty. Dalton McGuinty, you see, hasn't joined the company of Leslie Frost, John Robarts, Bill Davis, Frank Miller or David Peterson. No, Dalton McGuinty is joining the company of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves.

If you had to choose where you're going to be in the history books, who you're going to be with and where you're going to be situated in the index, one would think that for a Premier who campaigned on and advocated change, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves would be the last chapter mates you would choose. But in fact we've learned perhaps far more about Dalton McGuinty than we've ever wanted to when we witness his aligning himself with Mike Harris rather than with David Peterson, Bill Davis, John Robarts, Leslie Frost or Frank Miller.

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So we witness an ongoing attack on workers in this province, and shamefully, regrettably, tragically, on the weakest workers, the most vulnerable workers, the lowest-paid workers: women—by and large, women—new Canadians—by and large, new Canadians—recent or relatively recent immigrants to this country, many for whom English is not their first language, invisible minorities and people of colour.

Those in this chamber witnessed a spontaneous expression of denunciation and concern around the racist, sexist and discriminatory nature of this bill—inappropriately, I acknowledge—coming from the visitors' galleries. These people were apprehended by the gendarmerie and promptly escorted from the building. But I say to you, their message was not lost on those of us in the New Democratic Party, because the denunciation of Bill 144, the maintenance of the Harris-Eves denial of card-based certification of the vast majority of workers in this province, is ringing and echoing across Ontario. That's why, first of all, New Democrats say very clearly to this government that this bill has got to be the subject matter of public and province-wide committee hearings—that's number one—not token hearings.

There's a whole lot of folks out there, a whole lot of working women and men, a whole lot of workers, a whole lot of new Canadians, a whole lot of women workers, a whole lot of visible minority workers, a whole lot of the lowest-paid workers in this province who have

something to say about being denied the right to join a union on the basis of card-based certification; not just joining but forming a union local.

Understand what this means, Speaker. Being able to form a union local means that you can engage in free collective bargaining with your boss. What could be a more fundamental right in a democratic society than to be able to engage in free collective bargaining with your boss, of course for wages, of course for benefits, of course for pensions, but also for safer workplaces, for fairer treatment in those workplaces and for the maintenance of jobs that workers work hard at?

I had occasion to tell you yesterday, during the opportunities given to me during questions and comments in response to other members' participation in this debate, and I'm proud to say it again, that I firmly believe that the trade union movement, its membership, its leadership, does more to create social and economic justice in this province, in the Western world, than any other institution, bar none. I have no hesitation saying that because I believe it. I believe it as firmly as I could ever believe anything.

Why do I believe that? Well, I've had occasion to tell you more than once how I, like any other person, am very much the result of how we grew up and who our parents are or were and our grandparents before them. Like more than a few others here, I'm the son of immigrant parents, for whom completion of grade 8 was considered a significant achievement, and grandparents who were illiterate in their own language, never mind their new language of English, grandparents who couldn't read or write their native language. They were peasants, illiterate and uneducated, or rather, unschooled.

As a child during the 1950s, and then growing up into the 1960s, I watched this generation, in this case post-war immigrant Canadians, build things. I watched them build homes, and they did it with their own hands, breaking their own backs in the course of doing it. You, Speaker, being, give or take, my age, may recall that there was a time in this province when building a house didn't mean hiring a contractor; it meant you and your partner and your kids, if they were old enough, and maybe some relatives, coming down and building a basement—digging it not with a steam shovel but by hand—and living in that basement while you built the first floor and then the second floor of that house. I'm sure I'm not the only person in this chamber who has recollections of that as a kid during the 1950s.

These people built homes, they built neighbourhoods, they built schools, they built churches, they built hospitals. They built and worked in factories, and in the course of working in those factories and creating huge amounts of wealth—because those workers did, they created huge amounts of wealth. They, in the course of forming trade unions and engaging in collective bargaining and advocating for fair labour laws in this province, which date back to the 1950s with the advent of card certification under the premiership of the very conservative Leslie Frost, and building those trade

unions, struggling—and struggle they did, and the struggles oftentimes were bloody. People went to jail, and people were, as they said it then, blacklisted and denied the opportunity of working in any number of industries because they were active in the trade union movement or they were organizers in the trade union movement or they were considered agitators.

So the struggle to build trade unions in this province is not an insubstantial one by any stretch of the imagination, nor is it an insignificant part of this province's or this country's history. The median age in this chamber is adequate for most of us, albeit as children, to have been witnesses to some of the significant battles, struggles and sacrifices made by working women and men during the course of building trade unions and trade union locals and developing fair labour relations legislation here in the province of Ontario and in other parts of the country.

The achievement of that was not without its substantial consequences as well. The trade union movement is solely responsible for the creation of the working middle class. There would not be a working middle class were it not for the trade union movement. No corporate boss ever gave a raise to a worker or let that worker take home his or her fairer share of the wealth that that worker created in that workplace as a result of, oh, largesse or benevolence or noblesse oblige. Let's understand something—and don't take it from me. George Soros himself—you know George Soros; I've talked about him before—the multi-billionaire money trader, über-capitalist and author, writes very fundamentally in more than one place in the numerous stuff he has published about how the very nature of the corporate beast is to make profit, and it's neither good nor bad. It's an entirely neutral thing. Corporations have no conscience, they have no soul, they have no heart and, increasingly, as we understand, they have no nationality—none whatsoever, do they? Capital can be rotated and switched from one jurisdiction to the other, not even with the stroke of a pen any more, but the click of a computer key. We witness it on a daily basis, don't we, and working women and men in this province suffer as a result of it on a daily basis?

Just as an aside, I remember 1988. I remember that federal election around free trade. I will concede that many of us, if not all of us, who fought against free trade weren't entirely sure that the predictions we were making about free trade were bang on; we weren't. We suspected it, but we had no life experience. But at the end of the day—reflect on this—everything that any of those opponents of free trade ever predicted in that debate has in fact come true in relatively short order, even though we weren't sure of it at the time, hasn't it?

When you see, yes, primarily young people taking to the streets in places like Seattle or Quebec City, where I know I was with many of my colleagues wading through the tear gas but a few years ago, we understand that the impact of free trade and globalization on working women and men in this province and in this country has been

disastrous, and furthermore that it has done nothing to better the lives of those workers in so-called Third World or sub-Third World countries.

1550

Let's understand what it means for the trade union movement. With the participation and leadership of the workers who form and constitute it, let's be very clear about what it means to say that they created the working middle class. Let's talk about those things that are the subject matter of debate on a daily basis in this province, in this Legislature, as I suppose they should be, those things that make us characteristically Ontarian—no, characteristically Canadian—those things that the rest of the world envies: public education and public health care. They're both very much under attack—we're witnesses to that—but both very much, in my view and in the view of New Democrats here in the Legislature and across Canada, worth saving.

Understand that the corporate bosses, the corporate elite, never had any interest in building, creating or developing public education, never mind public post-secondary education. If you're part of that corporate elite, if you are a corporate boss, if you are the person or persons who not only control but own the wealth that's being created by workers in the workplace that you own, you don't need public education, because you always have been and always will be able to send your kids to the private schools providing the best education that money can buy.

Public health care: Public health care is not that old. It's not so historic that there aren't a whole lot of us in this chamber, Mr. Hudak excluded because of his youth, who have a clear recollection about that point in time in the history of this province and in the history of this country. Let me say this, as I have had occasion to observe before: It wasn't that long ago—well within the lifetime of most of us here in this chamber—when once the kitchen table was cleared, a mother and father sat down and in hushed tones debated about whether or not to take a sick kid to the doctor the next day, because doing so meant dipping into the rent money or the mortgage money or the utility money. You see, it wasn't that long ago—well within my lifetime—that we didn't have a public health care system, when it was but a dream of people like Tommy Douglas and other CCFers and other progressives. It wasn't until the 1960s that public health care began to become entrenched.

Let's understand: The very wealthy, the owners of corporate wealth, have never had any need for or interest in developing public health care, because if you're very wealthy—whether 50 years ago, 70 years ago or today—your wealth enables you to purchase the best health care that money can buy.

Just as with public education, especially public post-secondary education, it was that working middle class, trade unionists inevitably, that built those factories, worked in them and created the wealth, and then fought and struggled to get a fair share of the wealth, and that created that working middle class. It was they who had

the resources, through their tax dollars, invested in their communities, in their province and in their country to build public education, to build public health care.

I have no hesitation in telling folks, as I've had occasion to tell them before, that I'm the first generation in my family to be able to access post-secondary education. I'm sure my critics consider it perhaps a waste of my time and their public money. But I want to tell you that I consider myself to be incredibly blessed—and I hope others who are in a similar position to me would agree in their own right, having been the first generation in a family of immigrant, working-class Canadians—to be able to access post-secondary education.

I remember the 1960s. I remember that era of democratization of education, especially post-secondary, here in the province of Ontario. I'll give credit where credit was due: Bill Davis, as Minister of Education and then as Premier, was the author of much of it, prompted, make no mistake about it, by CCFers and New Democrats, who were a formidable force then, as they are now, here in this Legislature. That's the period in time, late 1960s and early 1970s, when we witnessed the growth of community colleges, with the promise that held for more and more children of working-class and lower-income families accessing post-secondary education, as well as the growth of universities like Brock University in St. Catharines, like Laurentian in Sudbury, like Lakehead in Thunder Bay—any number of places. It was working people that paid for these schools, paid the salaries of their professors and paid the salaries and wages of the support staff in them. Whether it was Brock, Lakehead or, yes, even York, working women and men did it. They built them with the \$2-, \$3-, \$4-, \$5-a-week check-offs on their paycheque, and, trust me, paycheques were modest. They did it not so they could attend those schools but so their kids and grandkids could.

To deny the role of the trade union movement in that social phenomenon is to be blind to the history of this province and of this country. To deny the role of the trade union movement and its struggle for workers and by workers to get a fairer share of the wealth that they create, to deny that role in the development of public health care is to ignore the history of this province and of this country.

I, for the life of me, cannot understand why the current Minister of Labour and his Premier, Dalton McGuinty, would align themselves with the Wal-Marts of North America rather than with the workers—women, new Canadians, visible minorities—who have so much to give this province and this country and who are effectively being excluded from membership in and participation in trade unions, trade union locals and free collective bargaining by this government's adamant denial of card-based certification to them.

Discriminatory? Well, let's understand fundamentally what discrimination is. Discrimination means treating one class of persons different from another class of persons when they're the same persons. We have overcome any need to debate legitimacy around dis-

crimination based on gender. We have, a long time ago, overcome the need to even consider the legitimacy of discrimination based on race or on skin colour. Yet we witness in this bill, authored by this Liberal government, the most reckless and dramatic discrimination against the largest group of workers in this province, the most vulnerable group of workers in this province, the most readily and easily intimidated group of workers in this province, by granting one group of workers card-based certification and denying it to another.

I've got to tell you something about the Tory position, and I disagree with it wholeheartedly. However, the Tories are not engaging in the same discrimination that the Liberals are. The Tories make it quite clear: They don't want any worker to belong to a trade union. Whether they're building trades workers, whether they're needle trades workers, they don't want any worker—indeed, the Conservatives demonstrated, when they were in power, through Bill 7 and other bills, other pieces of legislation, that they would pass as much legislation as was necessary to create more and more hurdles for workers to belong to trade unions.

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I'll take this one further and tell you that not only do I believe, and New Democrats believe, that the entry into the trade union movement has to be the same for every worker in this province without discrimination against one group of workers, but that every worker in this province has to have the right, acknowledged by legislation, to belong to a trade union movement, to a trade union, a trade union local and to collectively bargain, including agricultural workers. The NDP legislation that accorded agricultural workers their right to join trade unions and to freely collectively bargain was a highlight in this province's history and in the history of the labour movement and of working women and men. New Democrats insist that before any sense of justice can be attained, we have to restore that NDP legislation in this province that accords every worker—agricultural workers included—the right to belong to a trade union and the right to freely collectively bargain. Needless to say, that isn't a part of Mr. Bentley's Liberal labour reform package.

Furthermore, New Democrats and others in this province recall the period of labour peace when the NDP anti-scab legislation was in effect, legislation which was promptly ripped out of the statute books by the Conservatives, just as was the right of agricultural workers to organize, as was the right of all workers to form a union local on the basis of card-based certification. When anti-scab legislation was in effect in this province, when there were labour disputes and work stoppages, they were fewer, they were shorter and they were certainly far more peaceful. Nobody was mowed down by scab buses being escorted by hired goons, strikebreakers in their black stormtrooper uniforms with their snarling German shepherds and Rottweilers and their truncheons at their side. No picketing worker was ever mowed down by strike-

breaking goons when anti-scab legislation was in effect in this province.

Corporate bosses knew they had to resolve differences at the negotiating table, and they did. They did. In fact, anti-scab legislation was part of the policy regime that started to lead this province out of the deepest, darkest recession that it had experienced since the Dirty Thirties, and we should never forget that. We witnessed some of the most substantial investment in the automotive industry while anti-scab legislation was in effect in this province, and we witnessed a resurgence of the economy, a recovery from the dark, deep, scary, frightening, dangerous, tragic depths of the horrible, deep recession—a depression.

Let me just explain to you what companies like Wal-Mart—and I don't have to tell what you kind of reputation Wal-Mart has across the province, the country, the continent, do I? Their reputation precedes them. They are as anti-union, anti-worker a corporate body as one could ever find. As I made reference to George Soros, let me finish that. He explained very clearly that not only is profit the single motive of the corporate entity, but he explained how you make profit, and it's not rocket science. You make profit by employing the fewest number of people at the lowest possible wages—end of story. Wal-Mart has made no secret of that, have they? Wal-Mart has made no secret that its huge profits are derived from sub-living wages paid to its workers and the avoidance of responsibility for things like pensions and benefit plans by virtue of chopping up jobs into part-time jobs, sub-part-time jobs and, yes, even contract jobs.

It's really about choices. For the life of me, I don't understand why Liberal backbenchers would want to be the crafters of a province which makes it increasingly difficult to belong to a trade union, knowing full well that when it's increasingly difficult to belong to a trade union, wages remain suppressed, workers' rights are non-existent and workplaces continue to be more and more dangerous.

There's nothing attractive about a low-wage economy. Just ask the folks who live in one. From time to time, like everybody else, I'm involved in these talking-head programs, where they put somebody up from one of these so-called right-wing think tanks—an oxymoron, if I ever heard one—who somehow suggests that if you reduce wages or keep them low, you'll increase the number of jobs. Well, hell, let's reduce the minimum wage to 50 cents an hour and we could create a whole lot of jobs. We know now that women and men out there who are being forced to work for minimum wage understand that it's not a living wage.

Hundreds—no, thousands—of homeless people in the city of Toronto work every day, don't they? You know they do. They get picked up by vans, they get picked up on the street corners. We witnessed it with the scab newspaper operation down in Hamilton just a little while ago, where a Toronto Star subsidiary had a contract company picking up newspaper delivery persons, adults, and shipping them into various locations in the city,

delivering the local giveaway paper. What do you call it? There's a special name for that; I don't know it off the top of my head. They give away the paper free, an advertiser type of paper. It's circumventing every labour law in the book, paying sub-minimum wage, adhering to no employment standards, not providing vacation pay, not providing CPP deductions. They did it because they can.

Linda McQuaig talks about the level of desperation. When you've got an increased level of desperation, when you have sustained high levels of unemployment, you've got people competing with each other for jobs, and they bid against each other for jobs. It's where scabs come from. It's where people who are prepared to work for lower and lower wages come from.

It's not smart to have a low-wage economy. Come to Third World countries and understand what low-wage economies do. Low-wage economies don't support strong public education systems. Low-wage economies don't support strong public health care systems. Low-wage economies don't support manufacturing and other economic activity.

I refer, or defer, to George Soros once again, who warns his corporate capital friends very clearly, "Be careful what you wish for." If you want to drive wages lower and lower, you may well be able to do that, especially in this context of globalization and with right-wing governments like this government here at Queen's Park that are going to facilitate you with anti-labour legislation. But be careful what you wish for, because if you drive wages low enough, nobody out there has the capacity to purchase the goods that other workers are making, and then you've got no economy. You roll the clock back 100 years—understand?—when you've got the Carnegies, the Rockefellers and everybody else in line-ups outside food banks and soup kitchens. Unlikely prospect? It's happening every day in every part of this province and every part of this country, and across the United States as well.

1610

Some oh so clever policy developers who feel oh so on top of things, arguing, "Oh, my, if we let wages go up to a living wage, it will have an inflationary effect,"—and, again, it's inevitably a woman and a mom. Tell that to the mom who works at the hotel in Niagara Falls, starting at 5 in the morning, scrubbing other people's crappy toilets and changing their filthy beds, and then goes to the 7-Eleven or the Avondale or the Winks to work the 3-to-11 shift for a minimum wage, because that's what you've to do to if you're going to keep food on the table for two kids and you're a single mom. I know these moms, just like you do. I know you do, Speaker.

Trust me, that single mom is not paying any substantial amount of taxes, because when you're making that kind of money, you're not paying a whole lot of taxes. But let's not for a minute applaud that, because understand, if those workers aren't paying taxes, we're not supporting those public things that make our com-

munity, our province and our country a healthier, a safer, a more just place to live in, a more prosperous place to live in.

I just sat down with a group of seniors a couple of weekends ago at the Legion down in Welland who are volunteers in and clients of—that's probably not the right word to use—a senior care, senior support program, which includes everything from home care through to helping people with rides to the doctor or to the oncologist for radiation treatment, stuff like that. One of the observations that was made by everybody there was that it's far cheaper for all of us, as taxpayers, as a community, to spend 100 bucks a week getting a home care worker into our folks' or our grand folks' home while they're still living in it than to spend \$300, \$400, \$500 or \$600 a day putting that old person into extended care. It's true. Again, it's so basic. It's so fundamental.

What does this government say to those women who provide that home care? This government says that it's hell-bent on making it harder and harder for that woman and her co-workers to belong to a trade union. What does the government say? "Oh, heck, we've got a debate that may well be coming on about the retirement age." And I'll say over and over again, I'm hard pressed to witness a retirement age in this province when increasing numbers of workers don't have access to pensions and when I see increasing numbers of seniors working at, inevitably, the lowest-paid jobs, be it at a Wal-Mart or a McDonald's or some other fast-food joint or operation.

The issue isn't about eliminating the retirement age. The argument, the debate, has to be about ensuring that every worker in this province, every member of this provincial community, upon reaching senior years, retirement years, has access to a pension that enables them to live with dignity and in health.

That's what the debate should be about, and you can't have that debate without talking about how important it is to have those workers unionized, because it's their trade union that's going to fight for and negotiate those pensions. No worker in this province, in this country, across North America, across the western world, ever got a pension as a result of the largesse, the benevolence, the noblesse oblige of a corporate boss. Every penny in workers' pension plans had to be fought for and earned and then won again by that worker.

Let me tell you what happens in places like Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart used every tactic in the book to defeat a union organizing effort. Even when there has been a clear majority of its workers who have signed union cards—knowledgeably signed them, knowingly signed them, willingly signed them—that usually one-week period of time between a card campaign and that so-called vote can have a devastating impact on the free will of those workers.

First gambit, the oldest one in the book: "We'll shut 'er down; we'll move out of town. Nobody will have a job then." Problem is, Wal-Mart means it. That's what they did in Quebec, didn't they? That makes the threat a little more formidable. But we know that they aren't

going to shut down every Wal-Mart in every part of Ontario, are they, because they need Ontario consumers to make money. But the workers in that Wal-Mart in that community aren't going to risk losing their jobs. Let's face it: If you're working at Wal-Mart, you don't exactly have a whole lot of options, do you? You don't have people knocking down your door offering you \$50-an-hour jobs. That's why you're working at Wal-Mart, and God bless those people, because they work hard. They do.

I read a wonderful book, *Nickel and Dimed*. Have you read that book? It's by an author from the United States. A wonderful book, *Nickel and Dimed*. Check it out on the Indigo-Chapters Web site, or Amazon or wherever it is you buy your books on the Internet, or go down to a bookstore—Lord knows if you can find one. *Nickel and Dimed*: a wonderful book by an investigative journalist in the United States who worked for a greasy-spoon restaurant joint down in Key West, Florida, then worked for one of these Molly Maid kind of cleaning companies, then worked for one of these rah-rah, join-the-team Wal-Mart type of operations, and more often than not had to sleep in her car while she was doing it, because when you're working for these kinds of operators, you don't earn a living wage.

What is our anathema for a living wage? What is the problem with us? There isn't a single member of this Legislature who doesn't earn a living wage; I'll tell you that right now. Minimum wage in this chamber is, oh, around 85 or 86 grand a year, and nobody here is going to suffer a whole lot of workplace injuries. Maybe the occasional paper cut—you know what I mean, Brother?—or, "Oh, I pinched myself shutting my desk." The only time people in this chamber are likely to wake up at 4 in the morning is to use the washroom and then get back into bed, because it isn't until 5:30 or 6:30 or 7 that you've got to get into your work clothes and head off to the mill, to the furnace, to the mine, to the farmer's field. Minimum wage here is around 85 or 86 grand a year. I'm sorry; I apologize to the staff. That's for the elected members. The staff working here are realizing, "My goodness, we're doing all the work and these guys are making all the dough." You know what? You're right.

What have we got against a living wage for every worker in this province? What have we got against the right of every worker in this province to negotiate a safer workplace? We're coming up to the Day of Mourning again, yet one more time, this year. All of us, I trust and hope, will be joining workers and families and friends of workers in our communities, more often than not in communities that have erected monuments to injured and slaughtered workers.

We persist in suffering workplace deaths—even now, in the year 2005—year after year after year, and workplace maimings and poisonings year after year after year. I can tell you there's one pattern that's oh so clear: The non-unionized workplace is far more dangerous than a unionized workplace. Make no mistake about it. The most dangerous unionized workplace is safer than the

perceived safest of non-union workplaces, because in a unionized workplace, unionized workers, with the strength of the union, can collectively bargain around workplace health and safety. You know that. You've been there, Speaker.

1620

Communities with unionized workplaces are inevitably more prosperous communities, because when workers are unionized, they're making better wages. That's clear. Let's understand that when somebody in this chamber stands up and says they don't want a worker or a particular class or group of workers or any workers to belong to unions, that person is saying they want the community that that worker lives in to be less prosperous than a neighbouring community. When workers are entitled to collectively bargain for a fairer share of the wealth that they create, they become consumers.

Let's face it: It's only this many of our population that get to stash away the money in those tax havens. Where are they? Down in the Caribbean, Nassau? Where are they, the tax havens? Working women and men don't stash money away in offshore accounts. Working women and men don't put money away in RSPs that are increasingly more generous as a result of federal government changes so that the very wealthiest are entitled to make more and more tax-free while the lowest-income workers have to pay proportionately more and more taxes. They do. You know that too, Speaker.

What in the world would anybody in this chamber have against the right of workers to form a union? It rots my socks when I read or hear about the vilification of workers for wanting a 25-cent-an-hour increase. You've read the same stuff I have. You've heard the same stuff I have on wacko right-wing radio talk shows: "These workers are greedy. They're selfish. They want another 25 cents an hour or they're going to drive the economy into the ground." Some poor stiff trying to make an extra 25 cents an hour is vilified, yet when Bill Gates or his ilk—who is that guy from Nortel? Is it John Roth? When John Roth steals millions of dollars from Nortel employees and shareholders, he's on the front bloody page of Maclean's magazine. They're heroes. We worship multi-millionaires and billionaires. We do. And if some working stiff tries to make another 25 cents an hour, we kick him or her to try to get them as low down into the ground as possible. What is the matter with us?

Frank Stronach, Belinda's dad, makes—what was it this year?—\$52 million, give or take. His income was \$52 million, give or take. That's a million bucks a week income. And the guy doesn't work. He doesn't shovel stuff. He doesn't work at the grindstone any more. He's not a millwright with a wrench. He's not digging stuff with a shovel or a jackhammer in the mine. Frank Stronach just owns the company—\$52 million a year income. And do you know what? Do you want to know something, Speaker? I bet you dollars to doughnuts any day of the week that he pays less income tax proportionately, percentage-wise, than you do. And he's a hero.

By God, driving that QEW from the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto to Welland, Pelham, Port Colborne, Thorold, south St. Catharines and Niagara, every time I see one of those Mercedes-Benz S500s, never mind an S600, I say, "There's another SOB not paying his or her fair share of income tax." Make no mistake about it. Think about it. You've got working homeless, because the minimum wage is not a living wage, and then you've got these guys in a \$160,000 car that rusts just as readily as my old Buick or Hudak's old Chevy truck, and we doff our hats to these guys?

I've told you before and I'll tell you again: John Roth, never mind Conrad "Tubby" Black, doesn't belong on the front page of Maclean's magazine. They belong in a back cell at Kingston Penitentiary. Conrad Black and Babs Amiel—you know, they've got the KP4W, Kingston Penitentiary for Women, just down the road there. There is a cell there for Babs. And if John Roth and Conrad have to share a cell, well I say, "Too bad, so sad."

Think about it: These people have stolen more money from more people than any outlaw biker gang that I've ever known of or read about. They have. I'm not defending outlaw biker gangs, but John Roth and Conrad Black have stolen more money from more people than any gangster ever has, than Tony Soprano ever dreamed of. And we put them on the damned front cover of Maclean's magazine, because somehow they're heroes. Trust me, they are adherents to that fundamental philosophy of how you make money by employing the fewest number of people at the lowest possible wages. If that means fighting trade unions, you fight trade unions. If that means electing governments that are going to pass legislation that makes it more and more difficult for workers to join and belong to trade unions, then you elect those governments, like the Liberals here at Queen's Park. That's what's happening with Bill 144, and the minister simply isn't coming clean.

Bill 144 is a fundamentally discriminatory bill. I don't begrudge any worker, building trades or otherwise, joining a union and forming a union local by virtue of card-based certification. That's why our position is what it is. We will not allow, we will not tolerate, the New Democratic Party will not collaborate with the exclusion of the largest number of workers in this province from card-based certification. Earlier today, on behalf of the NDP caucus, I put to the Minister of Labour during question period whether or not he had or indeed was prepared to submit this legislation to Keith Norton over at the Ontario Human Rights Commission, because I would be very interested in what Mr. Norton, as Ontario Human Rights Commissioner, has to say about whether or not this bill discriminates.

There is no doubt that the bill is discriminatory. The bill grants card-based certification to one group of workers who, I must tell you—it's no fault of theirs—happen to be male and predominantly white-skinned. The bill accords card-based certification, card cert., to a group of workers who are predominantly male and white-

skinned—oh, what do I say? Lighter skinned—and who, quite frankly, are amongst the higher wage earners in the province. You've heard what I had to say; I hope you have. I'm not about to reject that. It grants card-based certification to that group of workers and denies it to that much larger group of workers who are predominantly women, new Canadians, immigrant Canadians, visible minorities, people of colour—the lowest-paid workers in the province, the ones most likely to be intimidated by the Wal-Mart-type goon activities that take place between a card sign-up drive and the vote a week later. They are, and you know it, sisters.

I've got two women here, trade unionists, in the members' gallery, Ethel LaValley and Sandra Clifford, who have spent a lifetime—two lifetimes—working with workers, alongside of workers, in solidarity with working women and men as trade unionists. They'll tell you in a New York minute who are the lowest-paid workers in this province, who are the most vulnerable when it comes to that one-week gap between a card drive and the so-called vote and who are most readily intimidated.

1630

The intimidation is legion: the use of private investigators, the use of surveillance, the use of infiltrators, the use of fifth columnists, the use of coercion. New Democrats have stood up in this Legislature and talked about outright physical violence, beatings and goons being hired—in this day and age, in the year 2004-05—by corporate bosses right here in Toronto, in an effort to suppress union organizing drives, and workers having the crap beat out of them on their way to or from workplaces, with baseball bats, by goons.

Let me tell you, when you're earning minimum wage, when you're in a strange land with a strange language and when you're already subject to discrimination as a result of your accent or your name or your appearance or your headdress or your skin colour, that beating is all it takes to make you change your mind real fast, even though you know in your heart that you should stick to your guns. But sticking to your guns can sometimes be mighty painful and awfully expensive. These same workers who work so hard for so little and sacrifice so much because they're raising families—and they're raising families real good—want to make sure that their kids go to school and don't have to work in some of the downright crappy places and dangerous places and vile places that they have to work in.

I hope I've made it clear: New Democrats are standing firmly, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, in solidarity with working women and men in this province. We will not countenance legislation that denies a single worker the right to belong to, join and operate within a trade union, a trade union local, and within that great labour movement; that denies a single worker the right to do that by virtue of card-based certification. It was the standard for trade union organization during the period of greatest growth in this province, from 1950 through to 1995. If this government is serious about restoring prosperity to Ontario and Ontarians, it's got to make sure that there is

no discrimination against some of the most vulnerable workers, that every worker is entitled to card-based certification. This government has got to make sure that we praise and support and applaud the trade union movement and trade unionists for what they do for themselves, their fellow workers, their families, their communities and the economy of their province and country.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's certainly a pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 144. What this proposed bill will bring in, obviously, is card-based certification in the construction sector, interim reinstatement in all sectors and remedial certification in all sectors.

It's interesting to note, though, having just been lectured on how a political party should treat its people, should treat its employees—I'd like to read to you a letter dated October 22, 2004. It's from the Ontario public service staff union and it's addressed to "Howard Hampton, Leader, Ontario NDP." It reads, "Dear Brother Hampton," and the letter goes on. I've only got a short period of time. I'd like to read some of the excerpts from the letter. It says:

"So it has saddened me to see that the party status has not yet returned all our OPSEU NDP caucus bargaining unit brothers and sisters back to their jobs.

"Rather, the caucus"—that would be the NDP caucus—"has made every effort to exclude senior bargaining unit members, especially union activists, from the new human resources plan. Experienced, senior staff who should have been recalled have seen their jobs posted, and then they have been denied at the interview stage.

"The current plan that has 13 managers/excluded and only 9 members in the bargaining unit is a travesty."

It goes on. It certainly is a damning letter and doesn't contain some of the information we've just heard given to us in a very passionate way. It says:

"The Ontario NDP should be a model progressive employer, sensitive to labour principles and workers' rights. However, it appears to be far from that," and the Ontario public service staff union "has long experience of its own in that regard."

It seems to me that we've introduced legislation that is going to bring back some workers' rights that were denied, and bring back some balance. The previous speaker belongs to a party that might talk about that but in practice simply doesn't do it.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It's always my pleasure to hear from the member from Niagara Centre, but I must say that on this particular occasion, I happen to disagree with him. I think that in our democracy we are governed by the secret ballot. We're attempting to transpose our view, or the Western view of democracy, to many places in the world. It is a hopeful sight, indeed, to see many countries adopting more democratic positions in regard to their populace. The basis of our democracy—other than the Bill of Rights, of course—is the secret ballot.

I do believe that our government introduced once again the right of a secret ballot in certification of unions within Ontario. Unfortunately, Minister Bentley, with the co-operation of the third party, wishes to change the democracy that was injected into labour union certification by introducing compulsory certification without a vote of the members. This is undemocratic. It has always proven to be undemocratic. It will result in unionization of workers against their will by the intervention of third parties.

I will be voting against this most undemocratic step.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It was a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Niagara Centre. I want to reinforce what he said in his remarks, that there is, regrettably, no difference between the Liberal position on card-based certification and the Conservative position on card-based certification. The only minor difference is that the Conservatives banned it for all workers and the Liberals are going to ban it for all workers except those in the construction trades. They're going to ban it for most workers, not all, so I don't see a big difference between the two positions; what I see is discrimination against those workers who need representation by a union most of all because they happen to be working in low-wage occupations where health and safety is usually not a priority for the employer, where there are regular abuses with respect to the Employment Standards Act, and people regularly go without pay or vacation pay or holiday pay, and the list goes on.

I want one of the Liberal members to stand up in your place and justify why it is that you think it's OK not to allow card-based certification to all workers. Why do you think that's OK? Why do you think it's OK to apply the provisions of card-based certification only to the construction trade? For those of you who may not believe that that is the case, you just have to read the explanatory note at the front of Bill 144, which makes it clear that card-based certification only applies in the construction industry. I'm interested in card-based certification that applies to all workers, because I know we need it most for immigrant workers, women workers, workers of colour, who are regularly abused in Ontario workplaces. That's why this has to apply to all workers.

1640

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured and privileged to stand up and speak in support of Bill 144. The riding I come from is home for many unions: building trades, bricklayers, plumbers, electrical. Many of them are in my riding of London-Fanshawe. I believe they'll be happy when they see this bill passed, for many reasons. They see that the Minister of Labour has always been working hard to make sure that workplaces are safe and that workers are protected.

We've been talking about the minimum wage many, many times this afternoon. The Minister of Labour, after eight years, authorized, through this House, the minimum wage to be increased every year. I think it's a very important step to help the people who are working long hours to earn enough money to pay their rent and to pay

whatever's necessary, to send their kids to school and buy food.

Also, to compliment what Minister Bentley has been doing for the last year and a half, he came up with sick leave time to protect the workers. Also, he ended the 60-hour weeks—all these initiatives. It's a very important step toward reform in the labour movement in this province.

This bill would mean stability in the labour movement and stability in the construction area. As you know, almost 1.5 million people in this province are construction workers. I believe we need some kind of stability in order to keep going with our economy and to keep on constructing this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Kormos: I'm grateful for the patience demonstrated by my colleagues during the hour that I had the floor, but I want to repeat my gratitude toward trade unionists, trade union members and other working women and men in this province who are mobilizing to take on this government to ensure that this government extends the right to card-based certification to every worker in this province.

Up in the visitors' gallery today there's a row of—well, as it is, it's all working men. There are no working women up there; there could have been, but it happens to be all working men. I'm grateful that they have a sufficient interest in this debate and what it means to them and their families—maybe, for a couple of them who are my age, give or take a couple of years, not so much to them any more, but to their kids and their grandkids.

I talked to you about the sacrifice of our parents' generation and my grandparents' generation. I say that we had better muster up just a fraction of the courage and commitment and sacrifice that they displayed in building a strong trade union movement and building a prosperous Ontario to revive that strong trade-unionized Ontario, to revive that prosperous Ontario, to make sure that the legacy that was left to us is left by us to our children and grandchildren in turn.

New Democrats cannot support a bill that discriminates against one worker, and we'll never support a bill that discriminates against the vast majority of workers, the most vulnerable workers.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to stand and speak in support of Bill 144. I'm not so pleased, however, to follow my esteemed colleague the member from Niagara Centre. I cannot hope to be as flamboyant or as entertaining as he always is when he's speaking. His passion is something that I admire tremendously. He has always displayed tremendous passion.

What I am going to attempt to do, however, is to explain a little bit about this bill and why I support it, in perhaps not as entertaining a manner as our previous speaker, but hopefully in an effective way.

First of all, this legislation is an effort and a start to restore some of the balance that we lost in the province over the last number of successive governments. Labour relations in this province went one way and then went back the other way. Often when this government is introducing legislation in this House, we hear arguments from one side and the other, and if they're really, really against it, then I think we're probably hitting the nail on the head.

The thing with card certification—actually, there are two things before we get into that; two things that this bill does.

First of all, it restores something that was taken away by the Tories previously. It restores remedial certification. That was taken away in 1998. Basically, what happens is that if it becomes quite apparent to employees that they are being intimidated to the point where they don't feel comfortable to vote in favour of a union, then the OLRB, the Ontario Labour Relations Board, once again has the authority to certify that union. If it's found that in fact an employer is engaging in unfair practices, in trying to intimidate its employees into not voting for a union, then the OLRB once again has the right to go in there and certify that union—bang, done. So that is a big step forward. On the other side, on the flip side, if it is found that the union is engaging in the worst possible behaviour, in intimidating workers, then that certification application can be dismissed. So again, we've tried to restore some balance.

The other thing that is happening around this legislation, as has already been remarked about by one of my colleagues, is that there is a lot of other legislation that we are introducing to help support workers. I'm going to go through a couple of them.

First of all, the minimum wage, which had not been increased in nine very long years, is being increased annually right now. That's because we introduced legislation to do so.

Family medical leave: The government passed a law allowing up to eight weeks of job-protected leave from work for employees wishing to staying home and care for gravely ill family members. Interestingly enough, this was something that the New Democrats held up. We couldn't even pass it because they were looking for some extra resources or something to do some party work. We couldn't even get this, which was really supporting workers in a very meaningful way, through this House. It was being held up by the party that stands for workers here.

We've gotten rid of the 60-hour workweek. That was a ridiculous thing anyway, in my view. Nobody should be working that long. It's not sensible.

Enforcement and prosecution: This is an area where I think we have done a tremendous amount. In fact, in less than a year we have done 2,071 inspections in high-risk industries where we have gone in to make sure not just that workers were being paid properly but were being paid, because in some cases they weren't. So we have sent inspectors in. And speaking of inspectors, we've

hired 100 new inspectors and are going to hire 100 more inspectors. So we have those inspectors going in and making sure that workplaces are safe and workers are being treated fairly. We're actually doing it. We're putting the enforcement back into the enforcement act. It's not just a joke; we don't just talk about it; it's not just in writing any more. We're physically out there doing it, on the front lines with the workers, protecting them, sending a body in there to do it.

We have multilingual Employment Standards Act brochures, and this is rather effective: 21 different languages so that people can know their rights.

We have a gateway to women's information now so that women can specifically access information that's important to them.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act: We are moving forward on a number of fronts there. When I talk to the Minister of Labour, what I get from him is that his number one concern is the health and safety of workers, and he is doing his utmost to make sure that workplaces are safe for workers in Ontario. It is something that he is very, very passionate about.

There's another thing that I just wanted to remark on, because we've talked about the one side where we have the certification issue, but from the other side there was something that was really making workplaces a little on the unstable side. The previous government allowed decertification information to be posted in workshops. There was no mandatory posting of certification information, but there was mandatory posting of decertification information. Clearly, that's been one-way, and that created a lot of animosity and concern and did create an unstable work environment. This legislation gets rid of that.

1650

When we talk about card certification versus vote certification, card certification—with our legislation and with all the accompanying legislation that we have around it, vote certification works, and works properly, because we support it and we've given the OLRB the remedial decertification as well. It works in stable environments. If a store, for example, is going to be facing certification, the employees come to the store to go to work. It's in one place.

The construction industry doesn't have that situation, where people come to the same place and where they can vote in that place. So card certification is more necessary for the construction industry, because they go out to different locations. They're scattered around all over the province. They might be working in Toronto one day, they might be up in Barrie the next day, they might be in Hamilton the next day. It's all over the place. It's more mobile, so the card certification process is more necessary, because you have to have the opportunity for the union to go and just get a signature. We're not going to be able to bring all these people to one place for a vote. That's not going to work. We recognize that; that's what this legislation recognizes. So we've restored the powers to the OLRB. We've given them the opportunity

to support vote certification in the way it should be, and not to unnecessarily antagonize or try to create situations where it's imbalanced.

In the area of a mobile industry, where you can't get the workers in one place for a vote, this legislation finally addresses that. So you can go to the employers, wherever they are—Toronto, Barrie, Hamilton, wherever—and say, "Here, would you like to sign up here? Fifty-five percent: You've got yourself a union." It's as simple as that.

It's a very straightforward and, I think, a balanced piece of legislation. I think it addresses a number of issues that have long been overdue to be addressed. That's something we experienced a long time ago in this province: a fair and balanced labour relations atmosphere, environment, where both sides' needs and concerns were being addressed and people had more of an opportunity to work together and move forward as an economy in a productive way. That's what we have to restore. The government should not necessarily be leaning to one side or another, but should be making sure that people's rights are protected and enforcing it in a realistic way. That's why the accompanying legislation makes this make much more sense.

There has been concern from some people that having these sorts of supports for workers and for unions discourages investment in a working environment, but I disagree with that. I think if you protect rights and you create a stable working environment, that's the sort of environment that people are going to want to invest in, to work in and to bring their companies to. These are the reasons why I think this is fair, it's balanced and it has addressed many of the serious concerns, and why I will be voting to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: Let me raise this question with the member. I heard her say that part of the reason that card-based certification was going to be applied in the construction trade was because construction sites don't have a traditional workplace, that there's not a specific site that other workers would come to in the workplace which would make it easier for unionization to occur. I have to ask the member: What's the difference between construction sites now and that possible problem, and construction sites in 1950? The reason I raise this is because it didn't seem to be a problem in 1950, when we first brought in the OLRA and when we first allowed for card certification for all employees. It didn't seem to be an issue for the government of the day, for those in the construction industry or indeed for those others who actually had the opportunity to use card-based certification to form a union. It didn't seem to be a problem under Leslie Frost, John Robarts or Bill Davis, or even under David Peterson or Bob Rae, all of whom—various stripes, different governments—had card-based certification available to all employees, not just employees on a construction site in the construction trade.

So this is an argument that I don't buy at all. I'm wondering why the Liberals are even raising it as a

defence, because you should be embarrassed about the fact that your legislation clearly discriminates against workers in other workplaces outside of the construction trade. You're only going to allow workers in the construction trade to form a union using card-based certification. There's something wrong with that. That's discrimination, and it means you're leaving out the majority of workers who really need unions in their workplaces, workplaces where there are a lot of new immigrants, workplaces where there are a lot of women, workplaces that, by and large, are low-paid, where you need a union to bring those wages up. I don't understand this discrimination.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 144 this afternoon. I believe this legislation will go a long way in restoring fairness and balance to the labour relations system and in improving workplace relations and maintaining the stability necessary for a productive economy.

Businesses make decisions to locate for many reasons, and they choose our province partly due to our highly educated workforce, our technological capability and the quality of life found in Ontario. I believe this bill will allow us to continue to create an economic environment in Ontario which will ensure that businesses continue to invest and grow.

Although there has been reference to anecdotal evidence about investment leaving Ontario, there is no data that I've found that supports this or suggests that the specifics of our labour legislation are a primary consideration for corporations when investing in Ontario.

The proposed reforms in this bill are designed to restore balance and fairness in labour relations and to restore confidence in the labour relations system. In the past, labour legislation reforms have been dominated by political ideology favouring either labour or business. I'm happy that our government has taken a new approach, and I'm also happy to support this bill. I believe this legislation is long overdue. We've finally found a bit of balance. In my mind, it's a good first step, and it shows that our government is intent on restoring fairness and balance to a system that has been long overdue for this bill and this step in the right direction.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The member from Stoney Creek spoke eloquently about this bill. Unfortunately, this bill isn't about workers' rights; this bill is about payback. The construction unions donated \$63,000 to the Liberal Party for the last election. This is strictly payback. This is a terrible piece of legislation; a piece of legislation that takes democracy out of the workplace.

The member for Niagara Centre spoke eloquently as well, but he missed the point. It's not about democracy; it's about taking democracy out of the marketplace. What's wrong with the secret ballot? The secret ballot has done this country and the western world rather well for the last 600 or 700 years, and now you're saying that we can sign a card in the presence of other people. The intimidation that can take place through that process is unbelievable.

That's what a secret ballot is all about: It does away with intimidation. It allows people to speak their minds, to be honestly confronted with the issues and to take an honest position as to how they feel personally about it without recrimination. That's what this bill is going to destroy.

1700

The only good thing about this bill is that it's only going to do it to one small sector—one fairly significant sector, really: the construction industry. It's not going to open it up to all industries in Ontario. It's going to minimize it to a rather small section: the construction industry. I think that's wrong.

I will stand very proudly and vote against this bill, and I will work very hard in future Parliaments to ensure that this bill is turned around and defeated, as it should be.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the member from Stoney Creek has two minutes in which to respond.

Ms. Mossop: Thank you very much for the comments from the members from Nickel Belt, Brampton and Halton.

Again, we have to clarify that the important thing that is happening in this legislation, which had not happened before, is that card certification is being restored in the construction industry. It is going to happen in the construction industry, where it had not been happening before. That's the important thing.

Bill 144 does not take away the right to associate from any sector at all, and that is an important thing to know. It maintains the right to vote, it maintains the right to unionize, and it strengthens it in many ways. It's creating a working environment that is less adversarial. That is important.

As I mentioned before, it is also important to note the other pieces of legislation that wrap around this that help to support workers. The support for workers in this society, in any society, but particularly in Ontario—and I agree with the members when they talk about new immigrants and protecting people's rights and making sure that they understand their rights. That is why we have introduced other pieces of legislation as well that do that.

We've strengthened the vote certification and put card certification in an industry that needs it. Vote certification cannot realistically work in the construction sector because it is such a mobile industry. That's why it is being done this way: Vote certification works in the more stable ones, and we've strengthened that; card certification where it doesn't work as effectively.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to enter into the debate on Bill 144, An Act to amend certain statutes relating to labour relations. My colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo spoke very eloquently yesterday, as the official opposition, about our objections to this bill on a number of scores, and my colleague from Halton just spoke very well about some particular concerns to the bill.

I look forward to listening to the continued debate in this chamber on Bill 144, particularly what the government members are going to say, because as Mr. Chudleigh, the member for Halton, and Mrs. Witmer, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, brought up, and my colleagues from Nickel Belt and Niagara Centre as well, the question as to why you have card-based certification solely for the construction industry and any other sector would not have that additional right—if anything, I heard the most recent speaker from Stoney Creek tie herself into rhetorical knots trying to explain that. I think the average person listening or any member of a union or a non-union workplace would be very puzzled as to why the construction sector would have card-based certification and no other one would have that.

The member for Halton raised a point that maybe it has something to do with donations to the political parties. The construction industry donated, I think he said, some \$63,000 to the Ontario Liberal Party for the last election campaign. In fact, I think they financed those very hard-hitting negative ads as well that said, "Not this time, Ernie. Not this time." It was certainly one of the most negative campaign advertisements I can recall seeing in politics in support of the Ontario Liberal Party. So maybe that's part of the influence. Maybe there is payback there as well. Unless I hear a convincing argument from members of the government side, I'm led to conclude simply that this is payback, as the member for Halton has said. He has convinced me of his arguments. I have not heard an effective response, a rebuttal, to that argument.

Mr. Chudleigh: They don't even mention it.

Mr. Hudak: In fact, they tend to skirt past it, as the member for Halton is saying.

Again, for those viewing at home or following along with Hansard, the bill would allow those in the construction industry—if 55% of the workers or more signed a card indicating they wanted a union, then a union would be effectively certified. There would be no democratic vote or secret ballot vote for union certification. That would be a substantial change from the law that exists today, which says that all union certification votes must be done under a secret ballot, a democratic process, just as members to this chamber are elected, and just as important a precept in Canadian history—part of our culture, I would argue. Such an important decision—electing members to the Legislature, to a local council, or deciding whether you want to be recognized and organized by a union or not, certified or decertified—should similarly be done by a secret ballot vote that members can cast based on their own feelings without fear of intimidation from union members, fellow workers, employers, whoever. I think it's an important concept. This bill changes that in one sector only. The construction sector would have card-based certification where 55% or more of members have signed cards to be a union. Every other sector would not have that new right, which begs the question as to why the government has made this choice for one sector only. Unless I hear

otherwise, I'm convinced by the member from Halton's arguments that it has more to do with donations and financing of attack ads during the last campaign than any description of industrial relations.

Some particular concerns that we'll discuss from the opposition on Bill 144:

—section 2 of the act, which amends sections 11.1 and 11.2, about how a trade union is certified. I mentioned some of that;

—sections 4 and 5, the preparation and posting of documents regarding certification or non-certification;

—section 6 of the act we'll discuss as well, which deals with salary disclosure of union leaders who make, I believe—over \$100,000 a year, I think, is the existing law.

Section 7 deals with extraordinary powers to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for interim orders in terms of reinstating an employee who was fired before any kind of hearing could take place to determine the nature of that dismissal.

Section 8, as I mentioned already, is the construction-based industries' certification process by cards, which is unique compared to every other potential trade union in the province.

Section 2, I will discuss.

One more general point before I get to section 2: The government members seem to say that if the Conservatives are against it and the NDP are against it, they therefore must have it right. I haven't heard from a single group or individual who thinks that they have it right aside from members of the Liberal caucus. We heard yesterday quite clearly from a number of trade union members who were here in the gallery during question period. They objected quite strongly with very strong language that they found this bill to be "sexist," was the term they used; they found the bill to be racist, which is very strong language that you don't often hear in this Legislature. But surely, if you're hearing that from members of the trade unions, they feel very strongly that this legislation has got it wrong.

At the same time, we have a series of letters from the chamber of commerce, from various business groups including the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, one of the key voices for small business in Ontario that is similarly very critical of this legislation. I bet if you had asked the construction unions that get the additional rights for card-based certification, they would probably agree with members of the third party, who would argue that it should be for all unions. So even if they say that the construction industry is happy with this bill, I would bet that their preferred position would be for a more general card-based certification rather than a special exemption for them, because it does beg the question that the member for Halton rightfully brought up only a few minutes ago.

The member for Niagara Centre said it quite well. He does not agree with the position of the Progressive Conservative Party that we believe, in all circumstances, that a vote to certify or to decertify a union should be a secret

ballot, a true democratic process just like electing officials to the Legislature or to council. The member for Niagara Centre did give credit that we are consistent, and I will give credit in return that the third party, the NDP, is consistent in believing that there should be card-based certification for all sectors. The Liberal Party has chosen one sector to benefit and the rest not to be impacted by this legislation.

1710

This is a bit reminiscent of one of my favourite topics to criticize, and that's the greenbelt bill, where some landowners are more equal than others. We've heard questions and strong and persuasive arguments under the greenbelt bill that some developers had better access at a \$10,000-per-person fundraiser. We also saw that developers had some land exempted from the greenbelt—one example, a \$15-million windfall—where farmers across the greenbelt area had no such access to the minister and have found, by and large, that their requests have been ignored. So just like some landowners are more equal than others for the Ontario Liberal Party, so too some unions are more equal than others when it comes to Bill 144.

I would look forward to some evidence from across the floor of groups or individuals who feel that this legislation is appropriate. It looks like, by trying to give a little bit here, give a little bit there, ultimately the Liberal Party is making nobody happy—

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): No plan.

Mr. Hudak: —and they have no plan. It just seems like it's more trying to satisfy political needs as opposed to good policy for labour relations in the province of Ontario.

It is reminiscent, too, of—I forget the bill number; maybe my colleagues can help me; Mr. Speaker, maybe you can refresh my memory—of the so-called elimination of the 60-hour workweek bill that we'd been debating in this chamber just a few months ago. Some members of the government just mentioned it moments ago, saying that they've eliminated the 60-hour workweek. Well, no such thing has happened. That bill was more appropriately called the rubber-stamping bill, where individuals will still work 60 hours a week; all that happens is, some bureaucrat or maybe some stamping machine at the Ministry of Labour will simply stamp all of these applications to continue to work 60 hours or more a week. So that was, I would say, a bill under a false premise. If the emperor had no clothes when it came to the rubber-stamping, 60-hour workweek act, and similarly on Bill 144, it makes nobody happy, except for maybe the backroom political operators of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Let me get into the bill a bit more. I talked about section 2, which amends sections 11.1 and 11.2 of the act. It gives the Ontario Labour Relations Board the extraordinary power to order the certification of a union even if the employees did not vote to become unionized. As I said, a very important principle, a part of our culture in Canada when making big decisions that impact on

individuals significantly and over long periods of time, is that a democratic process should take place, which includes a secret ballot. I was pleased to be part of a government that ensured that individual workers would have the right to determine themselves, without fear of intimidation from employers or fellow employees or whoever, whether they wanted to be part of a trade union or not. This bill gives the power to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to order a union to be certified even if the employees did not indicate that they wanted that to happen. No doubt that would have a chilling impact on investment in the province of Ontario. I think Quebec actually has this provision and maybe Manitoba; there have been some stories in the news recently about that. This will put Ontario in a category that will discourage investment and job creation decisions in our great province.

Let me give you an example of some of the submissions that we've received. The one I have in my hand right now is the Ontario Chamber of Commerce submission to the minister, Mr. Bentley, on March 29, 2005. They have a similar line of thinking. They say that Bill 144 does the following: It "will fail to restore balance and fairness to the current" labour relations "system"; it "threatens the fundamental principles of democracy and fails to protect workers' rights"; and third, it "will hurt Ontario's long-term competitiveness and investment climate."

They go on to say, "Implementing the proposed changes may destabilize labour relations in the province and convince future or pending investors to rethink investing in Ontario-based businesses."

It's particularly important when we hear forecasts from the bank, among other sources, about slowing growth in the province of Ontario. There are some macroeconomic challenges, with a higher dollar, for example, and limited trade with the United States, our biggest trade partner, particularly for our province.

We have seen in this chamber, despite the Minister of Finance's refusal to respond, that our leader, John Tory, has rightly pointed out that the Liberal projections for growth are substantially greater than they appear to be in 2005, impacting on the budget. In fact, the Minister of Finance finally had to confess that the budget deficit for this year is going to be, I would think, at least three times what he said it was going to be when he stood in this chamber almost a year ago and claimed that it would be a \$2.2-billion deficit. Now we discover that it is actually going to be \$6 billion, and, I suggest, even more.

If the economy slows down, that impacts on our ability to improve health care, to invest in education, to invest in our roads, our police forces—priorities of the vast majority of Ontarians. Certainly by bringing in a piece of legislation like this, they give a chilling effect to the chamber of commerce, for example, and other industry associations. It should be a signal to the government that they are going to be impacting on growth in the province, which will further handicap their ability to invest in hospitals, to invest in community

services, to invest in the classroom, and will further erode the already messy fiscal situation the Minister of Finance refuses to fully present to the Legislature despite repeated days of questioning here in this House.

They go on, further, about section 2. The chamber of commerce letter goes further to say that they "advocate for the secret ballot system as it is the most democratic approach to union certification," a point that I made earlier, as my colleagues have as well. That is why we brought forward bills like Bill 69 and Bill 7 to restore better balance in labour-business relations in the province.

The chamber goes on to say, "Under this provision the OLRB (Ontario Labour Relations Board) can permit automatic union certification if the number of employees in the bargaining unit who have signed membership cards exceeds 55%, thereby eliminating the requirement of a secret ballot vote"—that, of course, for the construction sector only, if Bill 144 were to pass.

The OCC makes a further good point. They say that a secret ballot voting system is the most "secure way of ensuring the employees' true wishes are realized," because there's no force of intimidation. Nobody is looking over their shoulder. It's a secret ballot, by definition. That employee could make a decision whether he or she belongs to the union or does not want to belong, and if the majority say yes, it would be certified. The OCC is simply lined up on the same side as the Progressive Conservative Party: that the best way to ensure that the true wishes of employees are realized is through a classic secret ballot democratic vote.

They point out that they surveyed their members to make sure that the OCC was being an accurate voice for chamber of commerce members and their businesses across the province. They say, "When asked if automatic certification should be extended to other sectors beyond construction, 69% of the respondents were opposed" to that.

Later in the letter, on the same topic, the chamber says, "The OLRB's role should be focused on protecting workers' rights, including their right to choose representation in a secret ballot vote in all instances." You would think that if this government, the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government, were truly inspired by the concept of protecting workers' rights, they would protect a worker's right to choose certification or not through a democratic vote.

Other items on this: The Coalition for Democratic Labour Relations is an industry group that claims to represent 12 industry associations—and I believe that is true—representing over 100,000 small, medium and large businesses and roughly two million jobs in key sectors in Ontario's economy. They say, in their letter dated February 18, "When Bill 144 was introduced, it was presented as a tool to achieve 'fairness and balance' in the workplace." We're used to members of the Dalton McGuinty Liberal cabinet saying one thing in the presentation of the bill, but when we look beyond the cover we find something truly different underneath. Certainly, this

government has a well-earned reputation for breaking promises. At least according to the Coalition for Democratic Labour Relations, Minister Bentley's description of the bill was far from accurate.

They say, "We take issue with the way this bill threatens the fundamental principles of democracy by removing the democratic right of employees to vote on whether or not they choose a union and by impeding an employer's right to free speech."

1720

On an earlier topic as well, the impact on the business environment, this coalition which represents roughly two million jobs in key sectors in the province says, "Without major amendments, the coalition believes the bill will create uncertainty in the business community, and will likely delay key decisions about investments and hiring.... This couldn't come at a worse time, especially given the recently revised forecasts predicting slower economic growth for Ontario in 2005," reinforcing a position that I put on the floor just moments ago.

As I said, not only are business groups pointing out that this bill is not as the minister says it is and pointing out their objections, so too the trade unions have been heavily critical of this government's intent, this legislation and the broken promises. The release from Wayne Samuelson, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, and Irene Harris, the executive vice-president, has these thoughts in it: "Card certification, for example, is only extended to the construction trades, leaving the vast majority of workers, in particular low-wage workers in the labour-intensive service sector where most women, youth and people of color are employed, without this access to the union of their choice."

You would think, by the rhetoric, that a Dalton McGuinty Liberal government would be concerned about this kind of accusation, but I know when this question was asked in the House and we had members above in the gallery just yesterday, it was dismissed. I've not heard a counterargument that is anywhere near convincing, other than from the member from Halton, who talked about donations to the Liberal Party, as to why they would choose one sector over the other.

The OFL executive vice-president, Irene Harris, has even stronger language. She says, "Premier McGuinty needs to remove sexist bias from his law reform package by extending card certification to all workers"—very, very strong language.

Again, I'm confused how members of the government's side can claim that they've got the balance right, when they are being criticized by every group I've heard from on Bill 144 that their legislation is far from useful and, in fact, misguided in many circumstances.

I realize my time is quickly expiring. I know my colleagues will speak to some of those other issues. I did mention concerns about union salary disclosure. Leaders of publicly traded corporations need to disclose their salaries if they're at a certain level. The previous legislation had balance, where union leaders, if they made over \$100,000 a year, would similarly disclose those

salaries, just like our sunshine laws in the province of Ontario. That's been eliminated, as well as the balance of posting documents. If people want to certify or decertify a union, in plain language, why not have both options in sight so people can make a true democratic choice? Regrettably, this bill fails to please anyone besides members of the Liberal caucus.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: It's worth repeating, in response to the comments that were made by the member from Erie-Lincoln, that we're going to oppose the bill and so are the Conservatives, but for very different reasons. He's quite right about that.

We were very opposed to the changes that were made by the previous government through Bill 7, changes, for example, that did away with the card-based certification for workers, measures that had been in place since the 1950s. We were very opposed to other measures in their Bill 7; for example, the repeal of our anti-scab legislation, which made sure that employers in a lockout or strike position couldn't bring in scabs to do the work of those who were legitimately out on strike, trying to bargain for a first contract or bargain for better wages or bargain for improved health and safety conditions. So it is certainly true that we opposed the Conservatives when they brought in Bill 7, which put in place many of the negative changes that we have seen in the last number of years with respect to the ability of workers to organize, to be part of a trade union, to bargain collectively, to bargain for a first contract.

What's interesting is that we're not going to support this bill because what the Liberals are doing is essentially the same as the Conservatives. They are going to stop card-based certifications or continue the restriction with respect to card-based certifications on the majority of workers in the province of Ontario. The only single sector that's going to have the privilege and the ability to use card-based certification to form a trade union happens to be those in the construction trades. I ask again, why is it that the government is only reinstating card-based certification for one sector of the economy, for the construction trades only? What about the majority of workers out there who need card-based certification too, and who had that right before the Conservatives took it away, and this government wants to continue to keep it away from those workers?

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you again.

My premise on this bill is that I think the two opposition parties have made an excellent case about why we're moving forward with this bill. The member from Erie-Lincoln just said that both sides are unhappy: labour is unhappy and business is unhappy. Everyone's unhappy. Well, I've learned a few things about government in the last 18 months. I would think if the people on both sides of the extreme are unhappy, we must have been getting this balance just about right.

What I find interesting is that there seems to be kind of an amnesia here. When it comes to remedial certification and when it comes to interim reinstatement and particularly remedial dismissal, we've had this from 1950 to 1998. From 1950 to 1985, the government was the Progressive Conservative Party. From 1985 to 1990, it was a Liberal government. From 1990 to 1995, it was an NDP government. From 1995 to 1998, it was a Progressive Conservative government. There seemed to have been a balance, agreed to by all three parties, for many years in this province about this very issue, one of the core premises. But that balance has been upset. What has happened in this province is that we've allowed people who are driven by ideology to interfere with the free collective rights of people to form unions and with the ability and the freedom of business to make a profit, which is what we need to power this economy so that we have workers.

So what Minister Bentley is trying to do here—and I commend him, and the debate here just reinforces it with me. Obviously, we must have agreed to—gone back to a system where there was a balance, the balance that business needs to see; that someone, of course, can have remedial dismissal as well as remedial reinstatement, again, when there is just an egregious example that things are not being done fairly. So I support the bill on that alone.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The member from Erie-Lincoln does raise a number of concerns. He raises issues of fairness and balance. I have some concerns about Bill 144 with respect to what I perceive is some unfairness and some unbalance in this particular piece of legislation. I'm concerned about what impact it may have on our economy that at times can be fragile, and I'm concerned about the impact it would have on business investment and, of course, the impact on jobs.

As we've been hearing during debate this afternoon, this bill is seen as a Liberal payback to union bosses following the most recent election. I'm concerned about what this bill does with respect to rights of individual workers, whether they are in a union shop or a non-union shop. Again, to what extent does this contribute to balance in the workplace and to what extent does this contribute to fairness in the workplace? How long will it be before the government drags all sectors into a card-based system? So I'm concerned about balance. I'm concerned about unbalance and unfairness.

The member for Erie-Lincoln made mention of the secret ballot. There has been quite a bit of discussion about the secret ballot. This allows employees to make their support for certification or their support for a union or lack of support for a union in a way where there is no peer group pressure, no coercion or intimidation or potential intimidation, whether it be from fellow employees, from the employers themselves or from union organizers. I regret that employees in the construction trade will no longer have this democratic right.

1730

Mr. Ramal: I'm privileged again to stand up and speak in support of this bill after I listened to many speakers from both sides of the House talking about it.

I want to go back to the member from Erie-Lincoln, who started talking about an undemocratic process, forcing people to sign an agreement and the minister interfering to force them to sign this agreement. I guess he didn't read the bill very well. The bill says that if there is any unsolved problem between the union and the employer, the minister will go in and solve it in order to create stability in the construction sector. It's very important to all of us to have that stability.

Stability is especially important for construction because of the nature of the work and the short season. When you start building something, it takes a lot of preparations and a lot of effort. So, in order to create that stability, we have to make sure. The Minister of Labour, or the ministry in general, looks after that stability.

Also, I agree with many things being said in this House about the right for construction working people to form a union, and also for the ministry to make sure that this is not being driven by some people who have no intention for the stability of the future of this province and no intention to create more work. We as a government have to make a balance between both sides: the labourers and the people who are looking after a whole segment of the society to make a profit. So it's all about balance, all about protection. Since the Minister of Labour became the Minister of Labour in this province, he has been working all the time to protect the workers, to have fairness in the workplace and to make sure that workplaces across the province are safer.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Erie-Lincoln has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues. As Nickel Belt said, while the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party will disagree fundamentally on the legislation, we do respect the fact that each of us is consistent, as opposed to the Liberal Party, which has a well-worn reputation for saying one thing and doing the opposite when in government.

I appreciate Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant's comments. He shares my concerns about the impact of this legislation, among other initiatives, including a significant penchant by the Liberals to increase taxes on working families and on businesses. Combined with this type of legislation, it's going to have a dragging effect on our economy, limiting our ability to invest in key priorities like health care and education.

Perth-Middlesex had a good quote that I'm going to have to write down and use. His basic point was that if everybody is unhappy, then therefore we must be right; that if everybody says that they're totally wrong, then the Liberals must be right. Lewis Carroll, I think, would be proud of the kind of logic that says that everybody disagrees, therefore the legislation must be all right.

Perth–Middlesex also used the term that the “extremes” are griping. I don’t know if a member of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in Listowel would agree with the description of the CFIB as an extreme group, nor would the Stratford Chamber of Commerce like to be called an extreme association, as Perth–Middlesex tends to describe those who object to the legislation. While the Ontario Federation of Labour’s Mr. Samuelson may not always agree with the positions of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I would be very loath to say that one of the biggest unions in the province is an extreme group, as the Liberals seem to be describing them in debate today.

London–Fanshawe—I’ve run out of time. I think he made up his mind on this bill before listening to my debate, but I will still try to convince him to vote against Bill 144.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It’s a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. I want to say at the outset that of course I will be opposing Bill 144. I’m opposing it because I am fundamentally against the discrimination which is inherent in this bill, which the Liberals continue to try and justify in a manner that is beyond me.

Secondly, because we are dealing with amendments to the Ontario Labour Relations Board, I would have thought that the government was going to be bringing in provisions, which we had when we were the government, to ban scabs in the province of Ontario. But this government is not bringing in legislation to ban scabs, despite the fact that a number of Liberal members, when in opposition, called on the Conservative government to ban scabs. My, how times have changed, because here is the opportunity for the government of the day to do just that, and nowhere in this bill do I see any of the provisions that we had in place when we were the government to ban the use of scabs during strikes or lockouts in Ontario.

Let me deal first with the discrimination which is inherent in Bill 144. I’m not sure that the member from Perth–Middlesex has read the bill and understands what’s happening in this legislation. I say that, based on the comments he has made in the debate, because he has tried to say that if the legislation was good enough for Bill Davis and David Peterson, then, by God, this legislation is good enough for him. I wonder if he understands—and I don’t think that he does, so he’s going to have to read the bill. It’s not a long bill, so I’m encouraging him to read it. He should read it, and he will understand that the section with respect to card-based certification that the Liberals are bringing forward is different than that which was in place under Leslie Frost, under Bill Davis, under David Peterson and under Bob Rae. The provisions are different, Mr. Wilkinson, and I think you need to read the legislation and then you will understand that.

Under previous governments, going back to 1949: From 1949 to 1961, under Conservative Premier Leslie Frost, there was card-based certification for all workers;

from 1961 to 1971, under Conservative Premier John Robarts, there was card-based certification for all workers; from 1971 to 1985, under Bill Davis, there was card-based certification for all workers; 1985, under Frank Miller, card-based certification for all workers; 1985 to 1990, under David Peterson, card-based certification for all workers; and 1990 to 1995, under Bob Rae, card-based certification for all workers. The key is “for all workers,” so I hope Mr. Wilkinson and others in the chamber are going to understand this: all workers. That’s what was in place until 1995 and the election of the Conservatives, and then there was no card certification at all for any worker.

This minister, under the Liberal government, now brings forward legislation for card-based certification for only some workers. Only those workers in the construction trades are going to be allowed to join a union through card-based certification. Speaker, I know that you understand what I’m saying, but I’m going to repeat it for the benefit of those Liberal members who I don’t think have gotten it yet. Up until the election of the Conservatives, every worker in every sector in the province of Ontario could use card-based certification to become a part of a trade union. That was eliminated entirely under the Conservatives, and now the Liberals bring forward a half-baked proposal which would allow only workers in the construction trades to use card-based certification as a means to form a trade union.

1740

I disagree fundamentally with that approach. If it was good enough for Leslie Frost and for John Robarts and for Bill Davis and for Frank Miller and for David Peterson and for Bob Rae to allow all workers to use card-based certification to become part of a trade union, then it should be good enough for the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty to allow all workers to use that model. But apparently, under the McGuinty Liberals we now have two tiers of workers in the province of Ontario: those who are fortunate enough to be part of the construction trades—who will, after this bill is passed, be able to use card-based certification to form a trade union—and every other worker in every other sector who wants to join a trade union but will not have the ability to use card-based certification to do so because of the discrimination that is inherent in Bill 144.

That’s the reality, that’s why I’m opposing this bill, and that’s why I’m asking those Liberals who have gotten up to speak today and who will after I finish defend that discrimination: Stand in your place and tell me and those thousands and thousands and thousands of other workers who don’t work in the construction trades why it is that they can’t have access to card-based certification too, why it is that you are discriminating against them in that respect, when previous governments of all stripes allowed all workers to use card-based certification in order to form a trade union. Explain that discrimination to me and explain why you think it’s appropriate to discriminate against other workers in every other sector in that way.

I say that because it's worth repeating what my colleague from Niagara said, and that is that the majority of workers will not be able to form a trade union based on card-based certification. Many of those workers include the most vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario: immigrant workers who desperately need a job, who aren't aware of their rights and who, even if they were, would probably not exercise their rights because they're so desperate to provide an income for their family; female workers who traditionally have not been paid equal salaries for equal work, who traditionally are doing some of the most important work, for example, in the public sector, caring for the elderly in home care, caring for kids in child care settings; many immigrant women who are working in the garment trade and who are being exploited every day. We saw evidence of that in the auditor's most recent report with respect to violations of employment standards: again and again and again, violations in the garment industry, where most of those workers are women.

These are the most vulnerable workers in the province of Ontario. These are the ones who need the most protection when it comes to trying to be part of a trade union. These are the workers who are most vulnerable to employer intimidation and employer tactics when it comes to people trying to form a trade union to bargain collectively and to have better health and safety. These are the very workers who most need access to card-based certification as a model to join a trade union. These are the very workers that this government is discriminating against in saying, "No, you can't have access to card-based certification."

I don't understand that discrimination, especially against some of the lowest-paid, most vulnerable workers in the province, those who are the most likely to be intimidated by employers when there is a membership drive for a trade union going on.

I heard the member from Stoney Creek say that the reason we have to do this in the construction sector is because the construction sector traditionally doesn't have a worksite per se where you can go on an organizing drive, so because it's more transient as a workplace, we need to have different rules. Well, that didn't apply under every other government except the Conservatives, who did allow card-based certification to apply to all sectors. I don't understand the difference. Nothing has changed that dramatically in construction that would allow for a different set of rules in the construction industry and a different set of rules for everybody else.

But I guess I shouldn't be surprised that she was saying that, because the Ministry of Labour, when it released information about this bill November 3, used exactly that as the pathetic defence for why card-based certification was only going to be applied in the construction trade. It said, "Special certification rules" need to be in place "to recognize the uniqueness of the construction sector.... Given the emphasis on project work and the mobile nature of the workforce in the construction sector, re-introducing such a system here

promotes individual choice, fairness and balance." Well, what about other people who work part-time, casual jobs, who work at different workplaces? My argument is that their situation is the same.

Think of any number of security guards in the province of Ontario who through their employer are doing security work at different workplaces. That's transient work. They are not at a set work site day in, day out, where it's easy to organize them, where it's easy for them to sign a card. There is any number of immigrant women working in the garment industry, for example, who are working in more than one place or doing piecework. They're pretty difficult to organize too, pretty transient, casual work, different workplaces. Their challenges are the same, so why are we applying one set of rules for workers that the government defines to be in a transient industry when we know there are thousands and thousands and thousands of other workers whose circumstances are essentially the same—who are working alone, not on a specified work site, working at different jobs on different work sites—who still have a right to be part of a trade union and who should still have access to card-based certification as a mechanism to be part of that trade union?

I heard the minister yesterday, in response to my colleague Mr. Kormos, try to imply that, in fact, there was no discrimination here, that all workers are being treated equally when it comes to card certification. Well, just yesterday in the mail I got this briefing note from OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, speaking about card certification. The whole briefing note is on card certification. They've got a different take than the Minister of Labour, because they have said very clearly, "Union representation and collective bargaining should be seen as a fundamental right in a democratic society. A card-based system for joining a union helps to assure that right by reducing the ability of an employer to intimidate employees who wish to join a union...."

"Experience has demonstrated that between the signing of the cards and the vote, anti-union employers often illegally engage in concerted campaigns to, at best, 'persuade' employees not to join a union. At worst, these situations can and do deteriorate into poisoned work environments where intimidation, coercion and threats to close down the workplace and terminate any employees who favour unionizing are commonplace. Rather than enhancing the democratic process, the twofold process of forcing a vote and signing a union card has the effect of denying the free will of workers to join a union of their choice."

Bill 144 reintroduces card certification in a limited fashion. It will be extended only to employees in the construction sector: "The government has suggested that card certification is being provided to workers in the construction sector because they tend to be mobile and may not remain at a single job site for extended periods of time. Part-time and other contingent workers searching for longer hours or better shifts are just as mobile as

those employed in the construction sector, yet without card certification their access to unionization will continue to be just as seriously restricted as it was under the Conservative government." This is from OECTA. "The government must act to amend Bill 144 so that the law fulfills its obligation to protect and safeguard the right of freedom of choice to join a union for all workers in the province." That was from OECTA, and all members received it in their mail recently.

1750

The Steelworkers have said the same thing, and they have done a lobby of a number of MPPs with respect to this bill. The Steelworkers have said the following:

"The provincial Liberal Party and its leader, Dalton McGuinty, have discriminated against all other Ontario workers. They are discriminating against women, visible minorities, newly landed immigrants and workers with disabilities with their sexist, racist labour legislation.

"The Steelworkers are committed to helping unrepresented employees join our union. We are particularly responsive to the organizing needs of the most vulnerable workers, including women, recent immigrants, employees with disabilities and those who experience intolerable and unsafe working conditions and the arbitrary and unfair exercise of employer authority.

"The United Steelworkers submit that unless the right of all working people in Ontario to join a union is restored, the standard of living in this province is threatened; also, that the Ontario Liberal government has discriminated against its own citizens."

Here's a letter from the CAW. This is written to the Minister of Labour from Russ Barker, chairperson of CAW local 1524:

"Dear Sir:

"After hearing your government's position of late regarding a two-tier certification process for workers, we feel it is time to speak up on this important subject. Most non-unionized workers face discrimination on a daily basis. Those workers are now looking at that same sort of discrimination from your government.

"To give construction workers a card-check certification process and keep the undemocratic, intimidating voting system on behalf of other non-unionized workers makes no sense. This leaves the vast majority of non-unionized workers exposed to management's threats and intimidation. Management will bully and intimidate their employees throughout the voting process. This is blatantly unfair to the thousands of workers that want and need a union's help in their workplace.

"Please change this two-tier process so that all workers can feel comfortable to unionize."

It's very clear that this card-based certification only applies to construction workers, regardless of what the minister said yesterday. All you have to do is read the explanatory note at the front of the bill, which says, "New section 128.1 of the act, added by section 8 of the bill, applies in the construction industry and allows a trade union applying for certification to elect to have the application dealt with on the basis of a 'card-based certification' model." Only the construction industry.

Why the discrimination? I have heard no good rationale or reason for that, and submit to you that every worker, as was previously the case before the Conservative government, should have the right to use card-based certification as a mechanism to form a trade union and to be part of a trade union.

In conclusion, I said the other reason I was opposing this bill is because the bill does nothing to ban scabs. I was proud, very proud, to be part of a government that banned scab labour in the province of Ontario between 1993 and 1995. I can tell you that after the Conservatives allowed for scabs again, in my community in a single year we had no less than four workplaces where scabs were used. In one of those workplaces in particular, at Falconbridge, the company brought in hired goons from a company called Accufax who threatened and harassed and intimidated workers. It was nothing but trouble on that picket line month after month after month.

The government here is amending the Ontario Labour Relations Act, and the government should be bringing in the provisions that were in place when the NDP was in government to again ban scabs in the province of Ontario, ban scabs in workplaces where workers have been locked out or are on strike: workers who are trying to bargain collectively, bargain for a first contract, bargain for better health and safety conditions, bargain for better wages and pensions. There is no room for scabs in strikes and in workplaces in the province of Ontario. All that does is increase intimidation, increase harassment, increase violence on picket lines. Nothing good comes from having scabs.

If you look at our record, you will see that in the time that the bill was in place, there was the least amount of disruption in workplaces through strikes and lockouts in the history of the province. That's where we should be again. This government should be banning scabs, just like some of its Liberal members said they would when they were in opposition.

The Acting Speaker: It being nearly 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Thursday 31 March 2005

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 31 mars 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 31 March 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 31 mars 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue to build upon and strengthen initiatives to increase the effectiveness of measures by employers, professional regulatory bodies, and trade and professional associations to integrate the skills of internationally trained professionals into workforces, trades and the professions in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Delaney, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Delaney: I will be enjoying comments today from the members from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Scarborough Centre.

Ontario is blessed in so many ways. We have natural resource riches in our forests, in the rocks beneath our province, in our fields and rivers, in our beautiful, scenic environment with its four distinctive seasons, our peaceful and prosperous communities, our vibrant cities and our energetic people. But Ontario's wealth exists only because its people have in abundance the energy, the skills, the vision and the work ethic to add value to the many facets of business and life in our province. Our people in Ontario come from all over the world, more so today than ever before in our history.

In generations past, we Canadians have wrung our hands over the perceived brain drain of many of our best and brightest minds to other countries, especially the United States. But in recent years, not only do our best minds stay increasingly in Ontario—or at least in Canada—but Ontario has become one of the world's magnets for the best and the brightest of other nations, transforming Canada's brain drain into a brain gain.

How much of a magnet? Each year, some 120,000 immigrants come here to make Ontario their home. About 70% of adult immigrants are highly skilled, with post-secondary education or training. But there is an ominous underside to the opportunities within Ontario for those who are trained and educated outside Canada. It exists in the form of a de facto two-tier system in Ontario in which the range and variety of opportunity open to

many men and women who are trained or who have worked outside Canada is closed to those who have gained their experience beyond Canada's borders.

At the very least, this represents a waste of Ontario's most valuable resource, a resource that is more precious than the wood in our forests, the ore in our ground, the livestock and crops on our farms or the manufactured goods from our industrial and commercial operations. None of these things are possible without the skills found in the brains of the men and women in Ontario's workforce. With only 13 million of us in Ontario, we need every man and every woman capable of moving Ontario forward to have the opportunity to do just that. But sadly, it is not so.

Some four years ago, I became aware of the inequities of opportunity facing Canadians educated, trained or experienced outside Canada in the living rooms of some of our Ontario Pakistani community. I spoke with engineers, teachers, nurses, doctors, technologists and others with similar skills who all told versions of a similar story. It was that employers in Ontario wanted skills earned in Ontario and experience gained in Ontario, or at least gained in Canada. It seemed incomprehensible to me that a doctor, for example, who might have been trained in South Asia would find a human being any different here in Ontario than anyplace where he learned how to diagnose and treat people. It seemed unfair to me that a company might consider the skills of a mining engineer who had learned to extract ore in South America to be inferior to someone who had done the same thing in Ontario.

I recall meeting with a group of doctors from the Middle East. Some had found work in Ontario and, not surprisingly, were doing very well. Others trained in the practice of the very medicine that our province now finds in such high demand couldn't get their credentials or their experience recognized here. The dark humour at that meeting went as follows: What's the safest place in Mississauga? Answer: In a taxi cab. Why? Because there's a very good chance your chauffeur is a doctor.

Our government heard this need clearly and it made a specific commitment during the 2003 election. I have read my petition, and so have many others in the House, so many times that I imagine by now the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities must be able to lip sync it. But the government of Ontario has responded with specific and targeted initiatives. This year, Ontario is investing \$9.5 million to remove barriers that prevent new Canadians in Ontario from pursuing their trade or profession, and \$12.5 million in 2005-06.

For the doctors I spoke of earlier, there is a new centralized assessment service called IMG Ontario that will double the opportunities available to international medical graduates, from 90 to about 200. Ontario is also investing \$1.7 million over three years in two pilot projects to help international medical graduates strengthen communication with patients, improve their awareness of medicine in Ontario and assist those who are not working as physicians to use their skills in other areas of the health care sector.

Other specific initiatives will help internationally trained engineers, nurses and teachers. The government of Ontario has invested in a career bridge program to connect GTA employers with skilled and experienced immigrants eager to gain Canadian work experience. Ontario is also delivering enhanced job-specific language training to more than 1,300 internationally trained individuals over two years.

Further, the government of Ontario is investing \$5.8 million in 15 new projects to help more than 1,400 internationally trained individuals gain licensure, certification and employment in a wide variety of professions and skilled trades. As well, at the government level, we are providing new career and employment preparation services for internationally trained individuals through three agencies in Etobicoke, Mississauga and Brampton, and Ottawa.

But while the awareness of the skills within Ontario's newcomers is sinking in to our province's mainstream, it has not yet translated into enough action. And action is needed not only to help alleviate the existing and upcoming shortages of skilled professionals in trades across Ontario, but to address the upcoming retirement of the baby boom generation, the largest demographic bulge in North American history. The average age of most skilled workers in the building trades continues to inch toward 50 each year. Without certifying foreign-trained construction workers, who will build the municipal infrastructure—the roads, mass transit and other public facilities that all here agree that we need and need now—not to mention the many thousands of new homes in the leapfrog development that some in this chamber like to complain about?

1010

We need the trades to step up and devote their energies and skills to training and certifying more new Canadians. And some trade unions have got the message. I especially commend the Carpenters and Allied Workers for their state-of-the-art, brand new training facility funded entirely by a levy on the workers they represent so well.

We need professional bodies to step up and amend their bylaws and constitutions to remove the unfair, out-of-date, or simply discriminatory provisions that debase or devalue experience or training gained outside Canada. We need them to establish reciprocity provisions and to recognize professional education from other countries, and in so doing to provide access to certification of foreign-trained professionals that is fair, timely, trans-

parent and cost-effective. I have seen too many bylaws and procedures that hide behind phrases like “safety,” when the net effect of the rules is to erect a barrier to entry.

We need organizations in the private and extended public sector—the municipal, education, law enforcement, civil service and similar sectors—to look for the skill set needed and determine whether a candidate can do the job, will do job and will fit into the organization, without regard to where that candidate was educated, trained or worked before. In some fields, where the skill set of specialized workers is the major driver of the need, this issue isn't often experienced: fields like information technology, biotechnology and the like. I say that if our best and our brightest minds can make it in our most complex fields of work without regard to where they got their skills and experience, the same can be true in the operating theatre, on the assembly line, in the professions and in the front office.

This resolution urges Ontarians to use a gift far more valuable than our natural resources and our scenery in building the organizations, the institutions, and the buildings and other physical structures that comprise our Ontario. This resolution asks all Ontarians—private sector, trades, professions and the public sector—to hire the best minds they can find. The intelligence, innovation, energy, inspiration and drive within the minds of internationally trained Ontarians will help any organization thrive in today's world. Tapping into that vast domestic storehouse of brain power is cost-effective, non-polluting, socially responsible and also hard-nosed, good bottom-line business sense.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am pleased to join the debate on the motion that has been put forward by Mr. Delaney: “That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue to build upon and strengthen initiatives to increase the effectiveness of measures by employers, professional regulatory bodies, and trade and professional associations to integrate the skills of internationally trained professionals into workforces, trades and the professions in Ontario.”

I certainly would agree with the intent of this motion. Having come to this country myself as an immigrant with my parents—my father was born in Austria and my mother was born in Holland—this has been a long-standing problem for individuals who have come from other parts of the world and settled in this great province of Ontario, in this great country of Canada. There certainly is more that we need to continue to do to ensure that the skills and the abilities of those individuals are utilized to the fullest extent possible within our province, because of course our province and our country have been built as a result of the influx of immigrants over the course of many, many years. The only thing changing at the present time is where the immigrants are coming from to this country, but we certainly do live in a very blessed nation.

According to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, a statement was made in February 2003 that Ontario would receive 235,000 immigrants in that year alone. So we can see that we continue to be a destination for immigrants and certainly the flood of immigrants is going to continue to grow. I think what is important in that number is that of the 235,000 immigrants that had indicated they would come to Canada, approximately 60% will end up, and do end up, living in Ontario. It appears that Ontario continues to be the province of choice when it comes to immigrants finding a place to begin building their lives in this country.

However, when people arrive in the province and they begin that search for a new job that will allow them to provide for themselves and for their family, and provide them with the dignity of the job and the ability to bring home a paycheque at the end of each week, they often find that the skills that they have acquired are not recognized and are not appreciated by those in the province, so they have extreme difficulties. In fact, seven out of 10 immigrants who looked for work reported difficulties in this process, and the most common reasons that were given in facing difficulties were the following. The number one reason that new Canadians were given that there wasn't a job for them was because they lacked job experience. The second reason for their not being able to obtain a job was that there was a problem with the transferability of their foreign qualifications or their experience. These, then, are two of the most common reasons that immigrants find when they're looking for a job. They find it next to impossible sometimes to find a position that would recognize their education, their skills and their experience.

So today in this province, and throughout Canada, we have thousands upon thousands of highly skilled, highly trained professionals who unfortunately cannot find jobs that suit their skill set. Instead, these immigrants are relegated to jobs that have nothing to do with the valuable education or the training they have received. I think that most of us in this House, often, when we use taxicabs in the city of Toronto, do come across individuals who are highly trained professionals with degrees and experience from other countries, but they have been unable to find a job in their chosen field. So there is a problem and we need to recognize it and to address it. Obviously, the government cannot do it alone and is going to have to rely upon professional and trade organizations as well as the regulatory bodies and employers to assist them in making sure that these people can be integrated into the Ontario workforce.

Now, the problem doesn't stop. They're told they lack Canadian job experience and then they're told there are problems with the transferability of their qualifications or their experience. But even when they do find a job, they still experience difficulties in receiving the full value of their skills. According to a paper from the Institute for Research on Public Policy, immigrants educated abroad receive, on average, lower returns to the human capital they acquire abroad than their non-immigrant counterparts. The consequences, as the paper identifies, are that,

"These differences in returns adversely affect immigrants' incomes and hinder their integration into mainstream Canadian society." So there is more that needs to be done.

1020

I am happy to say that when our government was in office, we recognized that this was a problem and steps were taken.

One of things that we were able to do was to double the number of foreign doctors that were being assessed and trained each year to practise in Ontario. The number went from 36 to 90 as part of our commitment to provide Ontarians with better access to doctors.

We also invested \$15.5 million to develop bridge training programs to help immigrants re-enter the occupations in which they have trained and to employ their skills more quickly in the Ontario economy.

In 2002, our government also announced a partnership with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers that allows for internationally trained engineers the work experience they need to apply their previous training and experience to meet Ontario standards.

As well, our government was responsible for setting up and investing in the Creating Access to Regulated Employment for nurses program, CARE. This program allows for internationally trained nurses to gain the experience they need to practise in Ontario. It also allows for the removal of barriers that prevented internationally trained nurses from continuing their careers in Ontario.

It was also our government, in 2002, that announced an eight-step program to assist internationally trained doctors to work in the province of Ontario. Along with this eight-step program, our government announced \$36.4 million in funding to support this program.

The Conservative government was also responsible for investing and assisting in the implementation of the international pharmacy graduate program, a partnership between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the University of Toronto, and the Ontario College of Pharmacists. As a result, 21 internationally trained pharmacists graduated from this program in 2002.

I am very pleased to say that it was as a result of the hard work and initiative of the then Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dianne Cunningham, who was responsible for many of these initiatives. I am pleased that the Liberals are continuing to carry on with these initiatives and hopefully will continue to provide funding for these programs.

In conclusion, I would simply like to indicate my support for the motion, and the need for us all to work collaboratively—government, all parties, employers, regulated bodies—in order to do what we can to allow those who have trained elsewhere to have access to the jobs that recognize their prior education and their skills.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It will be very difficult not to support this resolution. It is innocuous and it's a friendly little resolution that I am going to be supporting, obviously. But—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, I'm a friendly little guy.

But I think we need to talk about this in a much more serious way, because we have underutilized immigrants for so long that I consider it a national disgrace.

The resolution says that we are going to build on things that other governments have done and we need to do that, and I agree. But we have done so little as governments—I include my own in 1990—that I am embarrassed to talk about this issue in terms of what we should have done, what previous governments should have done and what we need to do in the future to deal with the underutilization of a cultural capital. It's there and it makes us look bad as governments, but, worse, for those immigrants who are suffering it, they have to deal with the pain of not being able to break through the barriers that exist in all of our national institutions. So I am embarrassed by it, but I am equally, and more, hurt by the problem that it causes to immigrants.

First of all to blame: the federal government. The federal government brings people in—skilled people, trained people, highly educated people—to then abandon them to wherever they go and to whatever city they go, leaving them on their own to fend for themselves. How do we allow that? We, as a federal government, say we want skilled people to come in. The assumption is that when they come in, they will find employment in their field. But when they come, they do not find employment in their field; they have to find employment in some other place, where they are underutilized, looking for minimum wage jobs in order to be able to survive.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when many of us came, many of those south European immigrants had very little education. They have done well economically. Why? Because the economy was growing and we, as a government, as a nation, needed non-skilled people, but people who really wanted to break their backs creating our cities, not just in Toronto but throughout Canada. They did well.

Now the immigration requirements have changed, and we're looking for highly skilled people. And we bring them in, and we don't use them. Shouldn't we be saying to those immigrants that we call into the country, "By the way, before you come, check this out. You may not find a job in your desired profession. Or if you are coming, these are the requirements that are expected of you. So before you come, do not be disillusioned in the event that you do not find the job you want"? Or better and more proactive and positive, "Here is what we are going to do to help you out."

We do so little to help them out, knowing full well—based on what the member moving the resolution has said, based on what the other Conservative members said, we are aware of the problems, each and every one of us, from all political parties. It's no different at the federal level. Every political party is aware of the problem. Yet we've done so little to help them access the jobs that they so desperately need.

It's an interesting statistic, and I'm embarrassed by it. When people do find work—that is, the immigrants—the gap in what they are paid is widening. In 1980, newly

arrived immigrant men were earning at a rate of 80% of that of their Canadian-born counterparts. By 1996, their earnings had dropped to 60% of their Canadian-born brethren. It's incredible.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Shameful.

Mr. Marchese: I believe it's shameful, and we allow that. Yes, we speak nicely of that and how greatly skilled they are and how much more we need to do, but these people are suffering the problem more than I am, more than we are. I think more aggressive measures need to be taken. It's not enough to think or to say, "We are doing enough." My view is that, as governments, we're not doing very much—we're not—and I included our own government in 1990 as a way of saying I share the blame, without saying to you, "You're not doing enough." We have all not done enough. I think we have to grapple with it, be aggressive and break down the barriers. It is not enough to say that some unions are taking some good measures or some other corporations here and there might be taking some good measures. To isolate one or two instances is not enough.

We as a government have incredible opportunities in every ministry that we have to allow for the many things that someone like Royson James identified in his article, where he talks about mentorship. Many new immigrants require mentorship—not all of the requirement is mentorship, but this is one of the issues—where people need the assistance to be able to guide them through a job within their specifications, within their skill, as a way of gaining the experience and knowledge that is required, so that if a job opening does happen, they would be eligible to apply and they would have the knowledge, through a mentorship program, to be able to do that. Why aren't we doing that in all of our ministries? We can do that. We should be doing more of that. We should be requiring every deputy minister in this province to do that. If we did, more and more of our immigrant people who come to this province would have the opportunities they need to get gainful, meaningful and productive employment that is good for them and good for us.

1030

It is estimated that we lose \$4 billion to \$6 billion because we do not use the cultural capital that we have. Mentorship programs are important. We understand that Toronto City Summit Alliance and the Maytree Foundation have teamed up to create a mentorship program that is effective. That's good. It's a good example. Why don't we use that as a government and expand on that?

He makes reference to internship programs, and he says as well that the City Summit Alliance has a wildly successful internship effort called Career Bridge. So far, 180 recent immigrants have landed paid internships with major corporations like GM, TD Financial and Bell Canada. Why don't we build on that?

Why do we have to say to corporations, "Please do this; it's good for you"? Why don't we do it first, and by leading as a government, show the corporate sector—and unions, yes—that they have an incredible role to play and

that we can do it together? But we should be leading, not just simply saying to them, "You should do more," and allow this voluntary measure, hopefully, to take hold as a way of being able to help people.

There is another issue raised in that article. They talk about cultural competency. This term is showing up more and more. It addresses a company's facility and ease in absorbing, integrating, enhancing and using all the strengths and opportunities inherent in a workforce that reflects the population. It is important stuff. Some institutions, such as the Toronto Community Housing Corp., do this because they understand that to absorb and to reflect the makeup of our city helps the institutions in ways that help all of us, not just them but help that corporation and help the government. So some people are doing it, but we can show the way, in all of our ministries, as it relates to this issue of cultural competency.

Some other corporations include this as a core value, as a company philosophy and as a way of dealing with employees and clients. Incorporating our need to absorb, integrate, enhance and use the strengths and opportunities of immigrants as a core value, as a corporate philosophy in everything we do, wherever we are, would be something that we would appreciate, something that we would value and something that says to the immigrants, "When you come here, we are ready for you. We will do everything we can to make sure you have gainful employment." We just haven't done that.

Governments are beginning to respond to this issue because there's political pressure, and political pressure is the only thing governments of all political stripes understand. If we are not pressured, we do not deal with it. In my view, in the last two or three years, governments are beginning to feel the pressure of having to respond to the underutilization of immigrants and the fact that barriers continue to exist and that we're not breaking them fast enough. Governments understand that there is pressure, and they are moving.

We need doctors. We desperately need doctors, and we know there are thousands of foreign doctors, many of whom are qualified. If they're not, all we need to do is stretch that door open and allow more and more to be able to get the training so that they can become doctors. Yes, the government is doing a little more in that regard. That's helpful. But, knowing that we have a shortage of doctors in this province, where over 1.2 million people in this province do not have access to a doctor, why cannot we open the door more so more of those immigrant doctors have a chance to practise in this province? We can take umbrage from the fact that we're doing a little more than the previous government; I think it's 100 more doctors—I forget—or 50 to 100 more doctors. That's a good thing. How could I not praise that? But when you know that there are thousands of doctors, foreign-trained, looking for work, wanting to be doctors, and we must believe they can and should be doing it, then why aren't we doing more?

Yes, of course, there are institutions that are not breaking down those barriers fast enough. Why should

we, as a government, have to plead with them to change their policies as opposed to saying, "You will change your policies, you will hire more of these people, and you will do whatever it takes to hire them," rather than saying that we're going to work with the dental association, or the medical association, or the engineering association or the teaching profession? Working with, in my view, is slow. We need to urge them, to oblige them, to obligate them to do more. That's what governments could and should be doing.

I feel tremendous angst for so many immigrants who work for so little, yet are so highly trained. Poverty is growing faster, and is fastest among those immigrant communities. If they come with the training and educational skills they've got, why aren't they better paid? Why do we witness a community of all communities of immigrants suffering economically unlike ever before? I forget the statistic. I'm not quite sure I remember whether it's 50% of many of the immigrant communities that find themselves in poverty. Even if I'm wrong with that statistic and it's lower, it's shameful that we are allowing this.

Of course I support the resolution. It is a nice resolution. The member spoke about other things we should be doing. I support that as well. All I say to Mr. Delaney is that we have to work harder, we have to be more aggressive and we have to lead by example. We have to instruct all our deputy ministers of all the departments we oversee that they must do more to give the opportunities to immigrants that they so rightly deserve, given that we invite them here with a promise of meaningful and gainful employment. So as much as I'm going to support this resolution, and say and suggest that we need to do more, I wish we could have had a list of things that we could have supported that would give the government some guidance in terms of what it should be doing. I hope that, if not now, we will do it soon.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand in support of the resolution brought by my colleague from Mississauga West, who I want to say has been a very strong advocate on the part of his constituents, but in particular, on behalf of every new Ontarian who is coming to this province, seeking a better life for themselves and their family, bringing the skills they have attained in another jurisdiction. My colleague from Mississauga West has been relentless in trying to move this initiative forward, to bring the debate to this Legislature and to push the Legislature and all of us and all Ontarians along so that we can do more.

"That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue to build upon and strengthen initiatives to increase the effectiveness of measures by employers, professional regulatory bodies, and trade and professional associations to integrate the skills of internationally trained professionals into workforces, trades and the professions in Ontario."

I say to this Legislature, I stand very proudly in support of that resolution.

The issue we're dealing with today is one I spoke about in the very first speech I made in this House. I have

to say that, in my travels around my own community, some of the most difficult and darkest days were those days I sat with families and heard the stories of their struggles in finding a better life, in coming to Ontario, for their children, and who said to me, "We didn't know it would be this hard. We didn't expect to find so many barriers. We didn't think so many doors would be closed to us as we came to this country to try to have a better life for our children." The sacrifice those parents were making was really quite incredible.

1040

On the first speech in the Legislature that I made, I said this about the issue that we're dealing with today:

"We know that the diverse cultures that make up Ontario enrich our communities and strengthen our economy. We are committed to accelerating the integration of immigrants into our province. When foreign-trained doctors, engineers and PhDs are flipping burgers and driving taxis, that is a betrayal of the pact that was made with them when they uprooted their families and signed on to come to our province. It is a terrible waste of their valuable skills that we so desperately need. We must put an end to exclusionary practices and invite every new Canadian to take a seat at the table of opportunity, and we will make that happen."

When I said that statement, both today and in the past, I thought about the families in my community who are struggling to make ends meet and to make a better life. The statement is no less true today, no less of a challenge for our government and for this province today, than it was a year ago. And I have to say I am no less committed to making sure that we see this come as a reality and that we give those families a seat at the table of opportunity in this province.

Why is this so important? Because every year 120,000 immigrants choose Ontario as their home. They choose to come to the province that we all live and thrive in to bring a better life for their families. That's 60% of Canadian immigrants choosing this province as their province of choice. Over 70% of adult immigrants are highly skilled, with post-secondary education or training. My friend across the House spoke about the fact that the immigrants that we are asking to come to this country are those who have been successful in other jurisdictions, those who are leaving great opportunities behind to come here and seek out new opportunities for them and their families. We need to make sure that as a province, as a government, as a society, we open the doors and make sure those highly qualified people gain the skills and are given recognition for the skills and training they bring here so they can find work in the field of their choice and at the level they have been trained to undertake. So many people come into our province and are forced to work at a level much lower than what they were working at in their home country. We know, and our government knows, that our province's prosperity depends on improving access for internationally trained immigrants. By 2011, immigrants will account for almost all of Ontario's workforce growth. And if that is not enough, I think all of

us in this House know that we also have the responsibility to do what is right. It is good for the economy, but it is also the right thing to do.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about some of the initiatives that our government has undertaken. I am pleased to be part of a government that has made accomplishments in this field since taking office.

To help internationally trained individuals gain the skills and recognition they need to make the transition to Ontario's workforce, we've invested \$9.5 million this year to remove barriers that prevent them from pursuing their profession or trade. That investment will increase to \$12.5 million in 2005-06.

We've introduced a new centralized assessment service known as IMG-Ontario to help our international medical grads and, in 2004-05, this new service will more than double the opportunities available to international medical grads to 200, up from 90 the year before. We've also introduced two pilot projects that will help internationally trained medical graduates strengthen their communication with patients, improve their awareness of medicine in Ontario and assist those who are not working as physicians to use their skills in the many other areas in our health care sector.

We've also been working with engineers to help internationally trained engineers continue their careers in Ontario. To do so, we've partnered with the Professional Engineers of Ontario to provide Web-based information, mentoring, coaching and a college course that will meet the Canadian work experience requirement for licensure.

To help remove barriers faced by internationally trained nurses in Ontario, we expanded CARE—it was spoken about earlier—which provides internationally trained nurses with tools they need to prepare for the licensing exam. The pass rate on that exam has now more than doubled.

There are a number of other initiatives that the government has undertaken, and I'll leave it to others in this debate, perhaps, to make mention of those. But I do want to say that I certainly acknowledge that there is much more work to do to be done. We need to continue mentoring and we need to open up those opportunities. In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, one of the interesting and very rewarding projects that we undertook was holding a career fair where we brought those organizations that do much of the work to help bridge that experience, to open the doors, to mentor, to coach and to deal with the fact that immigrants come to this country with a lack of a network and a lack of connections. We brought those individuals and organizations together with employers and then we opened up that facility to many Ontarians and many residents in my community who are looking for work after having come to this country. We heard lots of success stories as a result of it. But we continue to hear many issues in my constituency office each and every day.

In closing, I want to say I look forward to being part of a government that will put an end to the exclusionary practices and invite every new Canadian to a seat at the

table of opportunity. I look forward to seeing that day come sooner rather than later.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this morning, and I will be supporting this resolution. I think it makes a lot of sense, and that's what we're here for: to make life better for the folks in our province, no matter where they actually come from.

I thought the comments made by Elizabeth Witmer were very valuable. She talked about all the things that the previous government had done in the past, and I want to say thank you to her for her comments, and also to the former Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dianne Cunningham, who set a number of the programs in place that Elizabeth Witmer talked about this morning.

I wanted to dwell a little bit on the skilled trades portion of the actual resolution. I can tell you that I think there may be far more problems in the professional area, with doctors, lawyers and perhaps health care professionals, than there is in the skilled trades area. As you know, we've got a fairly strong economy here in Ontario. We've actually got a shortage of tradespeople in most of the trades. I've dealt with it in my business career as well as doing studies here at Queen's Park in a task force I actually looked after. I worked a lot with people in the skill trades area in Ontario. First of all, one of the key areas is that we have a shortage of them, but not too many people who come into the province skilled in areas such as tool and die or millwright working, stonemasons, plumbing, heating contractors, that type of thing, go without a job very long after they come here. They may have to get some recertification in a few areas because they might have come from an area with completely different codes than we have here in Ontario but, overall, most of the people who come here with a skilled trades background, I would suggest to you, get employed very quickly in the province of Ontario.

You only have to look at the history of our province to see how many of the immigrants who have come to our country have helped build Ontario. I think of the Italian community in the construction industry. It's a known fact that in the last three or four decades here in the province, the Italian community has been a leader in the construction industry, in concrete work and in sewer and water main construction. They have literally built billions and billions of dollars in construction contracts.

I look at how many of the people from the Dutch community have entered our farming organizations as agricultural stakeholders, no matter where they are in the province. They've built some of the most magnificent farming operations we've ever seen, and could possibly see, anywhere in the world, right here in the province of Ontario.

So I think a lot of good things have been accomplished in the past dealing with our immigrants who come to our province as people with different skills. The government has accepted them and the people have accepted these folks very wholeheartedly and with enthusiasm, especially at times when they needed skilled trades and employment in these different areas.

I want to leave a little bit of time, Mr. Speaker, for my colleague Laurie Scott. I couldn't remember her riding name there for a moment, so I know the difficulty you sometimes have in that job.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Mr. Dunlop: Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I just want to say that I will be supporting Mr. Delaney's bill. Any attempt by the government to make improvements is important, and I think that should be the emphasis of all political parties in all provinces in our great country.

1050

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to begin by thanking the member from Mississauga West for bringing forward this private member's resolution to this chamber today. This is not a new issue for this member. This member is known in our caucus as the petition king, because I think he has read more petitions in this House than probably any member from this side of the House, maybe than any member from all sides of the House. The Speaker will know, from being in the chair for petitions, that not a day goes by when Mr. Delaney is not bringing a message from his constituency to this chamber. He's been up over 40 times raising petitions on access to trades and professions.

So this is not something that has come to this member just out of the blue. This is something he has been working on for a very long time. In fact, as well, he has been up in petitions working at trying to get a GO station at Lisgar in his community, and he has been successful at that as well. He's not reading the petition on trades and professions any longer because most of it has been implemented by the government. So I commend him on his work here at Queen's Park. He has worked extremely hard. He's one of the stellar members on this side of the House, he's an outspoken member of caucus, and I thank the constituents from Mississauga West for sending Bob Delaney here to Queen's Park to do the good work he has done.

I'm pleased to support this resolution. Quite frankly, when you hear the debate from all sides of the House, there's a growing impatience with this issue arising around the province. It's growing because we recognize how important it is for newcomers to Ontario to be able to access the trades and professions, to be able to do the good work they were trained to do in other countries. It's important for them and it's important for their families, but it's just as important for each and every one of us in Ontario that they can fulfill to the best of their abilities, and can contribute to our economy, can deliver for their families and for their communities the best possible work they can do, so that their skills and their abilities can be maximized. In that way all of us benefit in the end. So it's something that's important.

It's not a new issue. I remember being here in the late 1980s, during the Peterson government, when they were talking about breaking down the barriers to trades and professions. One would have thought that some 20 years later we wouldn't have to be talking about this any more,

but we are because the barriers are still real. I'm proud of what this government has done. This government has moved forward and broken down a lot of those barriers, but as every speaker has said, there's much more to be done.

Frankly, I'm growing impatient myself with this issue. I'm growing impatient when I see people come into my office like a young doctor, Dr. Arumugam Ganeshharajah. I'll say that name a few times, and by the end maybe I'll be able to say it without looking down at it. Dr. Ganeshharajah is a recent immigrant to Canada. He's the son-in-law of a stalwart constituent of my mine, Mr. Nadarasa. He's a physician, trained outside of Canada. In fact, he was more than a physician. He was the chief medical officer of health in Sri Lanka from 2002 to 2004. He was the chief medical officer of health in Oman, in the Arabian Peninsula, from 1985 to 2002. From 1976 to 1985, he was the chief medical officer in Sri Lanka again. So this is not just a regular, everyday physician. This is somebody who has a very decorated past. He's here now in Canada, he wants to practise his profession, and he has been getting very dejected by the time it's taking for him to get his credentials and be able to practise. It's becoming a real problem for him and his family.

This is a perfect human example of why we have to do everything we can to move forward so that these individuals who have so much to contribute to our community can practise their professions. To think that our province is in the midst of a bit of a crisis right now with regard to the shortage of physicians makes this even more frustrating for all of us.

The good news for this constituent and others in this predicament is that the McGuinty government gets it when it comes to the need to break down the barriers and take advantage of foreign-trained professionals. To increase supports for internationally trained medical graduates, the McGuinty government is investing \$1.7 million over three years in two pilot projects that will help international medical graduates strengthen their communication with patients, improve awareness of medicine in Ontario, and assist those who are not working right now as physicians to use their skills in other areas of the health care sector.

I know that Dr. Ganeshharajah will very much welcome these initiatives. He is so desperate to practise in the medical field that I think he would be happy to volunteer his services. He has volunteered his services, but we haven't been able to find anywhere for him in the health care system that is willing to accept those services at the present time. This kind of program is something I think will really help.

As well, I am pleased that the McGuinty government has introduced a new centralized assessment service known as IMG-Ontario. Members have spoken previously of this. In 2004-05, the new centre will more than double the opportunities available to international medical graduates to 200, up from 90 the year before.

This is good news for people like Dr. Ganeshharajah. It's good news for people who have medical and health

care credentials from elsewhere, because we know we need those people working in our health care system. We know it will be in the best interest of our community.

I want to thank Mr. Delaney for bringing this forward. I think it is very important. It is obvious that this government gets it, that we're doing our part. It's now time to look to the trades and professions and employers out there to join with us in making sure that these well-skilled individuals in the skills, trades and professions can be put to work, can do the work they are trained to do and benefit all of us as a result.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

Ms. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for getting the riding name right.

I am pleased to rise today to have the opportunity to speak to the private member's business by the member for Mississauga West. It certainly is something we are all in favour of, and people have spoken about that today. But the fact is that in the throne speech they had a year timeline. They were going to reduce the barriers for foreign-trained doctors, foreign-trained professionals and tradespeople. The year has passed. We still all want that to move forward. It is not moving forward quickly enough. We can all tell many stories of meeting with foreign-trained tradespeople and professionals in our communities who want to work and want to be part of your communities.

I support the member's bill. He has to bring it forward because I don't think the government has done enough in the time they have been in. We all need to support the initiative and realize the added value they bring to the province and to Canada. I'm running out of time, but I appreciate the opportunity to speak for this short moment in support of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Delaney, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Delaney: I acknowledge the comments of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. As an immigrant herself, I especially appreciate her support and her personal anecdotes that reinforce the frustrations many new Canadians face, even in a land of prosperity and opportunity such as Ontario. As well, she noted initiatives taken while her party governed Ontario. I am pleased and relieved that our agreement on the need for action transcends both different governments and party politics. May we continue, in her words, to work collaboratively.

To the member for Trinity–Spadina, I thank him for his comments. They accurately echo the need and the desperation of many in our newcomer communities.

I point out, however, that for whatever differences we may have with the federal government, we must acknowledge that federal programs such as English as a second language, multicultural, settlement and education partnerships, and many other federal initiatives do assist newcomers and will continue to.

I thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. She is one who, in her practice of law, has never lost the common touch and has devoted so much time herself to

issues and causes that assist women, and especially newcomer women. I am especially grateful for her own ongoing personal commitment to making Ontario better for the men and women who have crossed oceans to help us build our province's future.

1100

To the member for Simcoe North, the member is one who knows first-hand what life is like in the trades. He knows what it's like to get his hands dirty at work. As such, I find his support especially pleasing to me, and I thank him very much for his comments.

To my colleague from Scarborough Centre, he recognizes that debate in the Ontario Legislature, at what our Premier calls "Ontario's kitchen table," means that people's voices have been heard and that action and help are on the way.

To the member for Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, I'm sorry. I wish you had had a little bit more time, because I know of your personal commitment to the issue, and I thank you very much for your support.

Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to debate the issue here this morning, and I look forward to a vote in its favour.

SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'UTILISATION D'AIGUILLES SÛRES POUR SAUVER DES VIES

Ms. Martel moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 179, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries / Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à réduire les incidences de blessures causées par des piqûres d'aiguille.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin the debate today by welcoming some of those health care providers who are in the gallery for the debate today. The bill is about their right to have a safe workplace. It's about the right of other workers to be protected from injuries involving unsafe devices, and for the general public to be free from harm when unsafe devices end up downstream, in garbage cans and in community parks.

Bill 179 will protect workers and the public from needle-stick injuries. There are a number of medical devices called sharps, which have points or blades, and so are capable of inflicting a skin-puncturing injury. The most common sharps injury is a skin puncture by a needle attached to a syringe. Hence, the name "needle-stick injury." A worker punctured by a point or a blade may then be exposed to more than 33 blood-borne diseases, including some very serious or even deadly diseases, like hepatitis C or HIV/AIDS.

SEIU, OPSEU, and the Ontario Federation of Labour estimate that, annually in Ontario, some 33,000 needle-stick injuries occur in the health care sector alone. Of that

number, some 17,000 occur in the acute care sector. Each needle-stick injury, on average, costs the health care system \$2,000 in testing and treatment, although for those suffering from serious or deadly diseases, the costs far exceed that.

In Ontario, some \$66 million is spent every year on workers who have had needle-stick injuries. This doesn't include the WSIB costs associated with lost-time claims, and it doesn't include the emotional cost to workers and their families as they undergo testing for many months to determine if they have contracted a disease from a used needle.

The fact is that workers in the general public don't have to suffer from needle-stick injuries. The technology exists to replace conventional needles and other sharps with safety-engineered devices which are recognized by Health Canada. They have built-in features that, when engaged, prevent the blade or point of the device from coming into contact with the user of the device or another person. On some syringes, a guard slides out along the needle and locks into place over the tip of the needle. On others, a hollow sheath slides out to enclose the needle. Still other syringes retract the needle into the barrel. In all cases, the safety-engineered feature eliminates the possibility of injury by contact with contaminated blood in or on the device.

My bill would make it mandatory for employers in prescribed workplaces to provide for and ensure the use of safety-engineered medical sharps in any circumstance where a worker is required to use a medical sharp. The employer must consult with the joint health and safety committee on the selection of the appropriate safety-engineered medical sharps and must provide training on the use of such devices. In workplaces without committees, the employer must provide training with respect to such devices.

The bill includes a number of sections of Ontario's Occupational Health And Safety Act regarding inspectors, inspections, orders, whistle-blower protection and penalties for non-compliance by employers. The provisions make it clear that needle-stick injuries are serious health and safety issues and need to be treated as such.

I introduce this bill for two reasons. Firstly, other jurisdictions are in front of us on this issue, and there's no reason for Ontario to fall behind. In Saskatchewan, in November 2005, a new regulation will be phased in, making it mandatory for employers and self-employed persons to use safety-engineered medical sharps in a wide variety of health care settings. The government has also asked the task force for sharps injury protection to advise on the use of safety-engineered medical sharps in other workplaces.

In Manitoba, the government announced in its November throne speech that it would introduce legislation probably this spring. In the United States, the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act came into effect in 2001. Although it's federal law, it applies to workplaces under state-level jurisdiction. Some 20 states have also enacted their own even more stringent legal requirements involving the use of safety-engineered medical sharps.

In a study published in 2003, researchers at the International Health Care Worker Safety Center at the University of Virginia showed that after only one year of implementation, with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance, there was a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries. If the US and two other provinces can protect workers and the public from needle-stick injuries, then Ontario can too.

This brings me to the second reason why I've introduced this bill. Those unions representing workers who suffer needle-stick injuries have made numerous presentations to the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Health and even the Premier about the need for mandatory use of safety-engineered medical sharps. The McGuinty government has not responded. The health care Health and Safety Action Group told the Minister of Labour in three different meetings that mandatory use of safety-engineered medical sharps is a priority. In a letter sent to him on November 19, 2004, the group said:

"First, we need legislation to ensure that safety-engineered medical devices are introduced within the next year to health care workplaces across the province. Over 33,000 health care workers suffer needle-stick injuries every year in Ontario.... A regulation requiring the mandatory use of safety-engineered needles and other medical devices will not only eliminate up to 90% of such devastating injuries, but will actually result in a net savings of precious health care dollars."

Because of the lack of response from this government, SEIU, OPSEU and the OFL launched their provincial needle-stick campaign on March 11. The purpose of the campaign is to convince the government to do the right thing. When the Minister of Labour was asked what he thought of making safe devices mandatory, he told the *Globe and Mail*, "We're looking at that suggestion." I'd remind the Minister of Labour that it's been over a year since his own health care health and safety working group told him that making safety devices mandatory was a priority. How long does it take to look at this suggestion?

The minister also told the *Globe*, "So we're assessing whether we should have a regulation and if you have it, what it should look like." If that's the case, he should pick up the phone and call the Honourable Deb Higgins, Minister of Labour in Saskatchewan, and ask her for a copy of the Saskatchewan regulation. Better yet, he could go on-line to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Labour and see the regulation, because it's printed there.

This is not a complex matter to solve. Regrettably, the government seems more interested in a one-time, short-term, band-aid approach. On the same afternoon as the March 11 press conference, the Minister of Labour announced one-time funding of \$11.6 million to allow hospitals to buy some safety-engineered medical sharps. Instead of the mandatory use of safe devices, the minister will let hospitals buy some safe devices which will last for a limited time, providing limited protection for acute health care workers only. When the supply runs out, employers can go back to conventional needles and

sharps, and workers will be at risk all over again. Where is the sense in that?

The Sault Star had it right in an editorial it ran on March 14, which was then run in the *Toronto Star* on March 16. It said:

"Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has taken a step in the right direction by earmarking extra cash for hospitals to buy safer medical equipment this year, but it's not good enough...."

"The government should make instruments such as safety-engineered needles mandatory in all hospitals and clinics—and funding for the equipment should be allocated as part of every facility's annual operating budget rather than a one-time infusion of \$11.6 million...."

"The solution is not rocket science. Rather than conventional needles, health facilities should be using available safer forms that draw the needle into the syringe after use similar to the way a retractable pen works."

"Health care workers put themselves into dangerous situations every hour of every day to help the people of Ontario, and it is unconscionable to subject them to such unnecessary risks when a ready solution exists."

"Needles also pose a danger to everyone who might come into contact with the instruments until they are safely destroyed or buried. That includes hospital custodial staff, refuse collection personnel and even members of the public."

"Humanitarian concerns alone justify investing in safety needles, but bean counters ... should also be fully in favour considering the cost of testing and treating people who have been injured."

"Ontario already suffers a dearth of health care providers in many disciplines. Every effort must be made to protect them from infection that can remove them from the front lines temporarily or, even more tragically, permanently."

"This one is a no-brainer: Replace all conventional needles with safe versions, the sooner the better."

1110

The mandatory use of safety-engineered medical sharps is a serious health and safety issue in Ontario. No one has to suffer needle-stick injury, because the technology exists to replace conventional devices with safe devices. The weighted average cost of the five most widely used categories of conventional devices is 12 cents. By comparison, the average weighted cost of the corresponding safety-engineered devices is 40 cents. I think that eliminating the risk of a sharps injury and a possible serious or deadly disease is worth a quarter.

It's time to protect workers and the public in Ontario from needle-stick injuries. I ask members for their support for this bill on second reading and their support to refer this bill to the standing committee.

In closing, I'd like to very much thank the workers who are here today, particularly workers from SEIU, OPSEU, ONA and the Ontario Federation of Labour, who have been part of the sharps alliance part of pushing

this government to do the right thing; that is, the mandatory use of safety-engineered devices.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate on the private member's bill, Bill 179, that's before us. I do want to take this time to extend my compliments to the member from Nickel Belt for bringing forward this issue. I too have had visits in my office from some of the people who are very concerned about this issue, who would like to see some changes take place and who certainly have their opinion as to the practicality of the act and how it actually translates into practical means, on the hospital floor or on the floor of the health care setting, on a day-to-day basis. I thank the member for bringing forward this important issue. I know how important it is.

Occupational health and safety is a top priority of this government and of the Ministry of Labour. The member mentioned the minister and some of his comments. We know that changes are needed to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We know that improvements need to be made. We know that some of the things that have taken place during the past 10 years, perhaps, in this field haven't been changes in the right direction. We know that inspections perhaps haven't in the past taken place in a timely manner where they should have taken place.

I think, as we move forward in general on occupational health and safety and we look at such things as the ergonomics panel, which I've been asked to chair, that those types of things make a difference in the everyday life of ordinary working people in a very practical way. It's the right thing to do. As we improve the Occupational Health and Safety Act and our inspection record in that regard, I think it's a means of ensuring that all employees in Ontario have a right to work in safe workplaces.

I'd like to take a two-pronged approach in my comments this morning. One is to express my support for the private member's bill that she has placed before us. I think it's a very timely issue, as I've said. The other is that I'd like to take this opportunity as well to express, or to explain—perhaps that would be a better word—some of the ground we have been able to make up in this field in the very short period of time since we formed this government, which is now about 18 months, some of the recent funding announcements that have been made by our government in regard to health care and specifically in regard to safety-engineered medical devices. This goes along with a number of Ministry of Labour initiatives and I think also ties in with a number of Ministry of Health initiatives.

I had the pleasure on Thursday last week of visiting my own hospital, Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital in Oakville, and seeing firsthand some results of the implementation of some of the recent funding announcements, things like bed lifts and safety-engineered medical devices. I think we contributed somewhere between \$100,000 and \$200,000 specifically to my local hospital. Certainly, it was well received by the staff who were in

attendance at the announcement. It was long overdue. It received very favourable press. The member was saying that she had read editorials on this issue. I too have read editorials on this issue and newspaper articles that have been very complimentary to the type of progress that has been made.

I know from the remarks the member has made that she would like to see more happen; I understand that. I think this government is committed to ensuring safe workplaces for Ontario's health care workers. We'd like to see more things happen, obviously, in a number of areas, this being one of them. At this point in time the approach we have taken, and it has become clear to us, is that it's best achieved by the effective use, right now, of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. In the short term or near term, there is a way of dealing with it in the immediate future as you invoke the full power of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. At the same time I'm saying that, I'm also expressing my personal support for the private member's bill, because I think you can take a two-pronged approach, as I was saying: You support the private member's bill and allow further investigation of this issue and allow it to move forward to committee, and you take the short-term approach that we're taking at the Ministry of Labour.

Just for the sake of providing you with a few numbers in support of what we have done to date under the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act: Every acute care facility in the province was inspected in 2004 under our term of government. The focus was on infection control and compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. A total of 2,172 orders were issued in the 192 acute care facilities, and 68 of those orders related specifically to needle sticks; 25 orders required the provision or the use of safety-engineered medical devices. This government has committed \$11.6 million, as the previous speaker alluded to, to ensure that safety-engineered medical sharps can be used where necessary to protect health care workers.

The current system allows for different patient circumstances and different health care risks in particular settings to be taken into account by the health and safety inspectors to craft what they believe is the safest possible solution. My fear is—and it's not a large enough fear that it would make me not support the bill. But what we need to think about and take into account is, would the proposed bill eliminate the opportunity that is being afforded by our being able to customize some of the orders? It may or may not, but it's certainly worthy of investigation. It's a point that needs to be considered.

We believe that OHSA to date, under our term of government, has been an effective framework for dealing with the issue of medical sharps, and we are continuing to look at ways that this framework can be used to more effect. That's why this morning I'm supportive of the private member's bill. Among all those considerations as we move forward on this issue, certainly the opinion that has been expressed by the private member is one we need to take into account.

I'd like to thank you for the time and once again express my support and my gratitude to the member for bringing this forward.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean—Carleton): The member for Nickel Belt was my critic for a number of years when I was in government. When I first got here, I thought she was a rather partisan member, and I have to concede that I didn't like her for my first few years in this place. The member once went after me in question period and made quite a strong case, screaming at me at the top of her lungs.

Interjections.

Mr. Baird: Listen. This is a fun story. On my alarm clock I normally have the buzzer come on, but for some reason I'd pressed the radio to come on—I have my radio station set to CFRA in Ottawa—and I awoke in a cold sweat. The news had come on at 6 a.m. and the lead story was Shelley Martel screaming at me, which awoke me from my sleep.

Ms. Martel: It was a nightmare.

Mr. Baird: "It was a nightmare," the member for Nickel Belt says.

Ms. Martel: It was a nightmare dealing with you. Come on.

1120

Mr. Baird: It was a nightmare dealing with me. But I want to tell you that as I spend more time in this place I have gained, as I think all the members have, respect for the member and for the causes she pursues.

I'm not just speaking on behalf of constituents in Nepean—Carleton today. I'd like to think I'm speaking for patients in Ontario. I'd like to think I'm speaking for health care workers, for nurses, when I say that 25 cents, a quarter, is what we're talking about here, to provide a little protection to a problem that is not treatable; it's a problem that is 100% preventable.

The member for Nickel Belt talked about the serious infectious diseases hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS, and these are just two of many, many infectious diseases that can be spread by this accident. It's 100% treatable, though. While for those two and many other diseases, there is no cure, no inoculation, there is a surefire way to prevent this from happening. As I was reviewing the information provided by the member, she talked about an estimated 30,000 employees. I, frankly, don't really think it matters whether it's 30,000, 300,000 or 3,000. If we in this House, who act as the employers for the people of Ontario when it comes to the provision of health services, can do something to protect one, let alone 3,000, 30,000 or 300,000 incidents of workplace injury for the price of a quarter, I think we have an obligation to do so.

I'm a Conservative. I think we have far too many laws in this province. I think we are over-regulated to death. One area where I think virtually everyone in the province would agree is that the Occupational Health and Safety Act has to be clear and has to be strong to protect workers. Surely there could be any number of statutes and regulations that could be repealed to allow the Ontario government and the ministry not just to regulate

this, because—and I appreciate the comments by the member from Oakville—this is not just a labour issue, it's a health care issue. Obviously, there will be some associated costs with respect to our hospitals, our long-term-care centres, our community health centres and so forth with the passage of this bill. But I know that if I knocked on 100 doors in my community and said, "Do you think this would be a wise and important use of your taxpayer dollars?" 100 out of 100 would say yes. That would be a very rare unanimity that you'd find on a public policy issue.

One area where I might disagree with the member for Nickel Belt is that it's a question that we'd save money. Even if we didn't save money as a result of the \$2,000 per infection—you cited 17,000 acute cases alone—that it would cost in hospitals, you mentioned the \$66 million this would cost if we don't do it, plus the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims, which would be significantly more than that, particularly if it was something like HIV/AIDS where it could be going on for a protracted period of time while someone was afflicted. I don't know how any argument can be made in this example to say that we can't afford to do it. We can't afford not to do it.

I appreciate that this Minister of Labour made some comments one year ago that he believes this to be an issue and that they take this health and safety stuff very seriously over there. Let's look at the kind of legislation we've had on the order paper. Let's look at the kind of legislation we've debated in this House. We spent how many days debating bring-your-own-wine? Now, there's a priority for the people of the province of Ontario.

Interjection: And even now, no one does.

Mr. Baird: And even now, no one does. Why would we possibly take the Legislature's time to debate a bring-your-own-wine bill when such an important issue has been brought forward by the member from Nickel Belt?

Pit bulls. We banned pit bulls. Far more people are hurt and injured by these injuries than are attacked by pit bulls, unless in other parts of the province there are packs of pit bulls terrorizing communities.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): With syringes.

Mr. Baird: With syringes, the member from Niagara Centre says. But I look at the kind of legislation we've dealt with in this House that is far less important, far less serious and far less relevant to people and their families and communities in the province of Ontario than the kind of legislation that we have debated in this House. We've debated issues like banning raw sushi—a big priority for the taxpayers, I tell you. I'm getting just plenty of calls in Nepean on that. We talked about spending time on redesigning the trillium logo—you know, the trillium that adorns all of our letterhead? The trillium. Gee, that's an important point. The government is spending time, the government is spending money in the Premier's office and the communications whiz kids in the Premier's office are spending time on some of these trivial issues.

With respect to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we the people of Ontario are the employers of health

care workers, and we are their voice and their agent. We have a heightened responsibility, not just when it comes to our firefighters, our police officers and our paramedics, but also to our health care workers, who each and every day put themselves at risk. We saw during SARS the number of health care workers who went to work each and every day. The one thing that was worse than the danger they faced was the uncertainty, not knowing what the danger was on a day-to-day basis. We find out now that at one facility here in Toronto it was an airborne infection. A nurse or a physician or a hospital worker who was not even in that room could have contracted it through the air system. I don't think there's any evidence that that happened, but we've got to take that very seriously.

The provincial government has increased the share that they pay for public health. I think they've done it 25% for this year? They're moving to pay 75% of the public health dollars?

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Uploading.

Mr. Baird: Uploading. But none of these public health units is using this money for public health. What they're doing is just spending it on other things. If we're going to put more money into public health, surely to goodness, whether it's our flu program, which is probably one of the biggest sources of the use of syringes, this would have a greater priority. I'll tell you, if you go to Ottawa, our mayor is spending \$5 million on some bridge over the canal so that the students don't have to walk three blocks to the brand new \$40-million bridge that they built last year.

Mr. Kormos: And \$200,000 on that tour of European brothels.

Mr. Baird: And \$200,000 on a tour of European brothels. What a priority for the people of Canada. Thanks goodness Peter Kormos, my buddy here, stood up and exposed that waste of taxpayers' money.

I suppose we can't pay. I suppose we can't afford to protect our nurses and health care workers because there are deserving companies like Groupaction. There is some train museum or some golf club in Shawinigan that desperately needs the support of the taxpayers. But I say that we should be able to afford to pay for this. I challenge every member to go to their constituency, knock on 100 doors and ask your constituents if they'd be willing to pay 25 cents more for our health care workers to be protected. I will guarantee you that 100 out of 100 will say yes.

I want to see this bill passed today, but for those health care workers who are here, it's meaningless. It isn't going to pass third reading, because we will prorogue. This House will prorogue some time in May or June, and the question—the real, true amount of support—will be for members on the government side of the House to say, “You know what? This is a priority. It's not a partisan issue. We can work together on issues that are nonpartisan that are tremendously important.”

Interjection.

Mr. Baird: I have worked very hard. I worked hard to get your chief medical officer of health bill. I worked

very hard on the same-sex marriage bill to get that passed expeditiously. I worked hard on a number of pieces of legislation where the government has been prepared to come forward and work constructively. The problem is, government bills take priority over private members' bills in committee. I want to say on behalf of the official opposition, we will be happy to sit an extra day to hear from the public on this issue and to do clause-by-clause. So there is no excuse. Would you agree to that, I say to the House leader for the third party?

1130

Mr. Kormos: In a New York minute.

Mr. Baird: “In a New York minute,” he said. So we will give an extra morning. I say to the folks from the government House leader's office who are here, if they want it to be a Monday morning from 8 till 1, where we could have witnesses in and do clause-by-clause, it'll be no opportunity cost for you. If we want to call this bill for third reading, I'd be happy to sit on a Thursday night some day to deal with this. What about the House leader for the third party?

Mr. Kormos: I've got nothing else planned.

Mr. Baird: Nothing else planned.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member for Nepean-Carleton that I feel a little left out of the conversation.

Mr. Baird: You probably don't have a Speaker rotation set up for Thursday night, and I know you, Speaker, would be more than happy to stay here on a Thursday night to preside over third reading of this bill. We'll see if there's real support for this bill. We've got both opposition parties saying that we will clear the decks for a committee to consider this, to have the time. We'll clear the decks for third reading time in the House. We'll co-operate, as we are always very co-operative with the government on legislation passing Parliament. I know Lou Rinaldi will want to support this bill for third reading because I know workers in Northumberland care about this issue. We must get this bill considered in committee. It's tremendously important.

This is not just an issue with respect to hospitals. I toured the Queensway Carleton Hospital and spent five hours there working in the emergency ward, shadowing a nurse, and the pandemonium that goes on in that type of high stress environment—it's not like some sort of tea party, when you can be mindful. When you've got patients coming in, the nurses have got to triage them. They've got so much pressure, whether it's a nurse, a health worker or even a physician, or even a member of the public—it could be a mother bringing in her son to get cared for in an emergency ward who is injured by this.

Surely to goodness we can come together on what is a non-partisan issue. I noticed the member for Nickel Belt gave a very non-partisan speech on this issue. It has a lot of support from working women and men in the province, I say to the member for Niagara Centre, to stop the needle-stick and medical equipment injuries in Ontario. If this can save one life, if this can lead to reduced

injuries for health care workers, it will lead to greater productivity. It will demonstrate that we accept the responsibility as the agent for the employers, the people of Ontario, by passing this important piece of legislation.

I want to indicate to the member that I will be supporting this bill. I will also be supporting it going to committee and supporting it coming for third reading. That's when we'll find out whether this minister and this Premier are really serious about standing up for workers in this province. Let's not support injured workers; let's prevent those injuries in the first place. That's where we're best to put more of our time, effort and energy. I say to the House, it's well worth 25 cents to do it.

I look forward to the next speaker, who I think is the member for Niagara Centre. Don't adjust your TV sets. You've got a great speaker coming up next.

Mr. Kormos: I am so pleased to participate in this debate, and so pleased to see Ms. Martel's Bill 179 go to a vote in, oh, just 30 minutes or so. I am even more pleased that it's obvious that members of this Legislature of all political stripes understand how important this bill is. I look forward to seeing Bill 179 dealt with by committee.

I also want to make special mention of the incredible amount of work that has been done on this issue by the Service Employees' International Union; by OPSEU; by ONA, the Ontario Nurses' Association; by CUPE; indeed in addition to them, the alliance that was set up in 2002, which consisted of the SEIU and ONA, as well as being endorsed by the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and the Canadian Intravenous Nurses Association. In 2003, the Ontario Federation of Labour passed a resolution supporting in effect the principle behind Bill 179. There is clear, unequivocal support from the Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Nova Scotia federations of labour. Also extremely helpful in explaining to mere laypeople like myself, who have so little understanding about the technology, has been Chuck Rachlis.

I want to show you a device that has been used by this alliance, and in particular sponsored by SEIU, the Service Employees' International Union, this mock-up of a safety-engineered syringe. As a matter of fact, if the Sergeant at Arms—page, would you please—

The Deputy Speaker: You put me in a tough position. That's a prop, I believe, and shouldn't have been brought in here. Would you take your seat for just a moment, please? I think the member understands this.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I was in the process of surrendering that to the table so it could be kept as an exhibit and part of the record of this debate.

I'll join others in pointing out that the cost—perhaps a page could come forward, please, and deliver this quarter to the table. I surrender that particular device as well. Would you take that to the Clerks' table, please, and give it to them? I surrender yet another prop, a mere 25 cents, a mere quarter, which is the monetary cost of incorporating safety-engineered medical sharps in day-to-day usage in health care facilities so that our health pro-

fessionals, all of them, can work more effectively, more safely and with the greater confidence that they can come to work again tomorrow in the same physical health as they attended at work yesterday.

I want to comment on the member from Nepean—Carleton, who preceded me and was so gracious in introducing me. He made reference to the member for Nickel Belt and his first meeting with her and his recollections of her at the time. My experience is far different. I liked the member from Nickel Belt the minute I met her and never doubted her commitment to the people in her community, to the people in her riding, but also to the people across this province. Ms. Martel, as you well know, Speaker, has the respect of people in this Legislature across political lines. Oh, she is far from non-partisan. She is the most partisan member I can think of, and she has illustrated and demonstrated that in her written work, in her spoken work and in her performance here in the Legislature on so many occasions.

But you heard the member from Nepean—Carleton, when making reference to the cost, put this in context. You heard him make reference to my criticism of that \$200,000—that's almost a quarter of a million dollars—that five federal MPs are proposing to spend of taxpayers' money to tour the brothels, the whorehouses of Europe. That's \$40,000 apiece. The members are one John Maloney, who's my federal counterpart down in Niagara Centre, a Liberal; there's a New Democrat, Ms. Davies, from the Vancouver area; another Liberal, one Dr. Hedy Fry; a Conservative, former über-Reformer, one Art Hanger; and a Bloc Québécois member whose name I don't know. I read it but I don't remember because I don't know who it is. The Bloc Québécois, as you know, are very insular and don't really—but it rotted my socks to think that these five people were requisitioning 40 grand apiece to visit hookers in Europe.

1140

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sure that you're going to get to some relativity of your comments to this bill, and I would appreciate hearing it.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. It's all about putting the cost into context. You've got federal politicians who want to spend almost a quarter of a million dollars, going to the red light district of Amsterdam, and Sweden, I'm told; they are going to drop in at Reno, Nevada. Couldn't they just have watched the movie? What was the name: The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas? I think it's in the movie. You can get it at Blockbuster. Quite frankly, as I've indicated, I can take these folks down to Bridge Street in Niagara Falls and introduce them to any number of prostitutes on a good day.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre, I still haven't heard what I think should be discussed: this bill that is before our House in the province of Ontario, please.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. You get my point, and I have gotten yours. I apologize for having made you irate. I didn't mean to cause the Speaker to rise to his feet to chastise me. I thought I was being fairly

balanced in castigating in a multi-partisan way the participants in that \$200,000 European junket.

I wanted to draw your attention to that as a way of pointing out that in the total scheme of things, if we're talking about costs—because I heard the Minister of Health just the other day. Didn't you, Ms. Martel? When Ms. Martel was talking about this issue—it was during question period—he threw up his hands and said, "Where's the money going to come from?" Isn't that what he said? 'Where's the money going to come from?'

It's going to come from the same place that the five federal members expect the money to come from on their brothel junket of Europe. It's going to come from the same place as a similar group of five federal members' budget is going to come from on their junket being proposed—Don Boudria was the author of this one—to New Zealand and Australia to examine electoral reform.

But like other participants in the debate, I'm confident that there isn't a taxpayer in this province, there is not a voter in this province, there is not a resident of this province who wouldn't be pleased and proud to see the public investment of 25 cents per instrument—a public investment in workplace health and safety; a public investment in our health care professionals; a public investment in the quality of health care in this province—and an acknowledgement, quite frankly, of the sacrifices that health care professionals make on a daily basis, especially at a point in time when public health care is very much under attack both provincially and federally and when health professionals are being called upon to bear the brunt of a \$6-billion deficit being generated by this Liberal government here at Queen's Park—in good times; not in a period of recession, or, dare I say, of a depression of the early 1990s, when revenues had literally fallen through the floor. There were no revenues. Remember that, Ms. Martel? In good times, this government has generated a deficit of \$6 billion, and I tell you that it is criminal of McGuinty and the Liberals to tell health professionals that they should have to bear the burden of that deficit on their backs.

There they were in the SARS epidemic. We surely haven't forgotten that, have we? We haven't forgotten the sacrifices the health professionals made when SARS struck Ontarians, nor have we forgotten the continued commitment on the part of health professionals to respond to health crises like that, notwithstanding the tremendous risk to themselves in doing so and notwithstanding that they're called upon to do it more often than not without adequate tools, without adequate resources and with, at the very best on the best of days, middling leadership.

I tell you that the New Democrats are eager to see this Bill 179 receive second reading, so that it can then go to committee. It's important that during this session, through to June 2005, the committee deal with this bill, that the committee send it back to this Legislature and that the government House leader, because it is the government House leader's responsibility, ensure that it be called for third reading.

To pay lip service to it today but then to let it linger in legislative orbit, to let it be sent to the black hole of private members' public business, is an affront to health professionals here in Ontario. To want to play the good guy when there are folks sitting in the gallery, when there are witnesses, but then, once we're in the dark of night, without any onlookers, to say, "Oh, well, we'll give it lip service on second reading but we'll just let it slip; we'll let it go out to that centrifugal perimeter where private members' public business so often ends up," will not go without observation by the interested parties.

How much more do health professionals in this province have to put up with before they can expect a little bit of consideration? This is but a modest amount of consideration of the important role they play in our own lives, in our families' lives and in our communities' welfare and health. So I look forward to the vote on this. I want to be here with Ms. Martel and other New Democrats. I know people like Andrea Horwath from Hamilton have an intense interest in this. Her support for this, like other New Democrats at Queen's Park, has been unhesitatingly and unequivocally enthusiastic. So Andrea Horwath, Michael Prue, Rosario Marchese, Gilles Bisson, Howard Hampton and Marilyn Churley are going to support this bill. We support our health professionals, and this bill is the right thing to do at the right time.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I think, in speaking on this bill, Bill 179, anyone would be hard-pressed to vote against it. This is a bill that speaks very clearly to issues of safety in the workplace.

Many people think of doctors, nurses and other health care providers as being in a very nurturing occupation, and I think we often forget that it's also a very dangerous occupation. I have a daughter who is a nurse, and when she first got into the idea of becoming a nurse, she looked at the nurturing part of it. But then, as she went through her studies, she started to understand the dangers of the occupation, and some of those are dangers and risks that can't be prevented. We all have those kinds of things in the occupations that we choose, but there are others, such as the issue of the needle sticks and the sharps, that can be prevented. One thing we certainly want to do is take some of the risks out of an occupation that may act as deterrents to people coming into it. We want to take every opportunity we can to prevent that, so I support this bill.

1150

I think that, as a government, we support it as well. We have invested \$1.6 million, which was announced by the Minister of Health, Mr. Smitherman, at the beginning of March, on this very issue. We are taking action as a government to try to deal with the whole issue of the dangers that can be prevented in terms of needle sticks and sharps. So I would speak to it in support, and I want to thank the Speaker for the opportunity to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr. Wilkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair today.

Something I have learned—I've been in this place for 18 months—is that hospitals are dangerous places. They are wonderful places where you're cared for if you're sick, but for those brave public servants who actually work in our hospitals there is danger lurking around every corner. That's the first thing we need to recognize in this debate. We know that the first thing we have to recognize is that danger, and that's something I had to learn.

I spent a wonderful day in Stratford General Hospital with the nurses who work in our ORs. I saw the entire system, from the people who do the sterilization, the people who pull out the various instruments for every surgeon for that day's surgery, the people who coordinate it, the people who do the input and the nurses in the OR who are actually assisting the surgeons. I got to see three surgeries that day—they scrubbed me in—and I can tell you it was an eye-opening experience. I say this because from that experience I have a greater understanding of the danger and of what our responsibility is, in this place, to protect those nurturing people, our nurturing public servants, and to keep them safe.

As the member from Mississauga West was saying, we are facing a shortage of skilled workers, particularly doctors and nurses, because of the effect of the baby boom. We can't afford to lose any of them, and it would be a waste if we lost a nurse or a doctor through something that is completely preventable.

I commend the member from Nickel Belt for introducing the bill, and I tell her that I look forward to supporting her today and the passage of this bill into law. I did some research—I want to make sure I get this right—and on the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety's Web site I find it quite interesting that they were saying that in Canada, in the period from April 1, 2000, to March 31, 2001, there were 33,833 cases where they feel there was exposure through sharps.

I can tell you that the number one occupation within health care that is exposed is our registered nurses. But again, if we look beyond the risk factor, it's quite interesting that phlebotomists, who draw blood, actually have the greatest risk when you look at it on a per capita basis. They're followed by MDs, doctors who are residents and specialists and even our nuclear medicine technicians and sterilization attendants.

I had an opportunity to go into my riding last week. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, announced \$11.6 million to help us go needleless. I say to the member from Nickel Belt that she has good intentions. But in this place, there are good intentions and then there's money. What you have to do is put the money on your priorities. I was proud to go to our three hospitals—Listowel Memorial, St. Marys and Stratford—in my own riding, representing the minister, and talk about the money that's been flowed to our hospitals to go needleless.

The hospital in Stratford decided a few years ago to go completely needleless, and they just won a national

award and received a \$1,000 grant for their forward-thinking approach on this. They had to find it out of a very tight budget, but they were committed to making sure that the workplace was as safe as possible, to minimize that danger. I quote from the chief executive officer of that hospital, Mr. Andrew Williams. I thought he was quite wise to say that of course this was another example of our government's "commitment to the safety of health care workers and the patients who use hospital services.... These funds will further reinforce our commitment towards providing a safe environment at all of our Alliance sites for our patients, staff and volunteers."

I had a great opportunity when I was in Listowel and in St. Marys and Stratford to actually make the announcement with nurses and the health care workers there, not just the brass. I wanted to talk to the people who actually would benefit from this. I was amazed at the technology that can be used today to provide that safety. As the member from Nepean–Carleton and the member from Niagara Centre mentioned, we're only talking about pennies, and we have to compare those pennies versus the risk of losing a nurse or a doctor or any health care worker.

It's interesting. I found out that they were saying that in the emergency room, when things are crazy—things can be just crazy in the emergency room; it's a very hectic place. It wasn't just the nurses. A sharp can be thrown away into the garbage, but one of the great people who are support staff workers at the hospital can become infected. There is actual fact to back this up. The people who do the laundry at our hospitals, who deal with all of that linen—if there are sharps in there, they also are exposed. So it's not just a question of nurses or doctors. It's important. I know that even at Stratford General Hospital we had two nurses who were potentially infected. They were out of commission for six months, waiting to see whether or not they were actually infected with hepatitis C or AIDS or some other deadly disease.

I want to let you know that, on the government side, we support the member from Nickel Belt's initiative. But beyond that, we are actually putting the money into the system that's required to make it safer. I urge all members to vote in support of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Martel, you have two minutes.

Ms. Martel: I'd like to thank the members from Oakville, Nepean–Carleton, Niagara Center, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Perth–Middlesex for their intervention today. Let me make a couple of comments in reply.

I say to the member from Oakville, the government of Saskatchewan is bringing in its regulation under its own health and safety act. I would have liked to see Ontario do that too. But unfortunately, despite repeated requests to this Minister of Labour to do that, we haven't been able to get the McGuinty government to bring in a regulation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to make safety-engineered devices mandatory. That's why I've had to bring in the private member's bill.

Secondly, the bill would customize orders for the Ministry of Labour, because many of the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to orders, inspections, compliance etc., appear in the bill.

With respect to the comments made by the member from Perth-Middlesex about the recent government announcement and putting money on the table, I have to remind him that the money that was put on the table is one-time funding only. So after those hospitals purchase safety-engineered medical devices and after those devices are used up, then the hospitals can go back to the conventional devices, and we put health care workers at risk again. We need a permanent solution, and the permanent solution is to pass a regulation or pass legislation that makes the use of safety-engineered devices mandatory in prescribed workplaces in Ontario and forces employers to use the joint health and safety committee to determine which medical sharps will be used and also to provide training to workers in those workplaces to make sure they know how to use those devices properly.

As recently as March 24, the health care Health and Safety Action Group, which represents the unions whose workers are most affected, wrote to the minister again. They thanked him for the March 10 announcement but said the announcement "is limited in four critical areas": It covers only acute care facilities as opposed to all workplaces, it's voluntary rather than mandatory, the funding is one-time, and we need other issues like training, as well, to back it up.

I say to all members, if we're going to make this work, then it has to be a mandatory regulation or mandatory legislation that ensures that workers are able to use safety-engineered medical devices, that employers are mandated to make sure that happens and that employers are mandated to ensure the training happens so they can use those devices properly. That's what this bill is all about.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allowed for private members' public business has expired.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Delaney.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'UTILISATION D'AIGUILLES SÛRES POUR SAUVER DES VIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 56, standing in the name of Ms. Martel.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96—

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like the bill referred to the standing committee on justice.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1200 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OPP AUXILIARY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to be able to rise today and announce to everyone in the House that tomorrow is the 45th anniversary of the Ontario Provincial Police auxiliary program here in Ontario. It was established in 1960 and it is the largest provincial police volunteer organization in the country today.

Today, they have approximately 938 members and these 938 members actually volunteer about 220,000 hours of time, helping out our regular Ontario Provincial Police officers throughout the course of a season. The auxiliary members are included in all of the different detachments throughout our province.

Under the leadership of Commissioner Gwen Boniface, who is the overall head of the Ontario Provincial Police, the program is controlled and directed by Inspector Brian Wagner, who is the program manager, and Superintendent Mike Morton, who is the executive director.

The OPP auxiliary is made up of men and women from all walks of life who want to dedicate something back to their community in the process of working with police officers throughout our province. I want to wish them a very happy 45th anniversary tomorrow and wish the OPP and the auxiliary program all the best for the future years.

KITCHENER CHURCH OF GOD

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): During the second weekend of April, the Kitchener Church of God will celebrate the opening of its new tri-city multicultural community centre. The Church of God has been an active part of our community since 1975, and over the past three decades has grown from 15 members to its current average attendance of 250 active churchgoers.

One of the church's mottos comes from the Book of Proverbs: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." After doing an assessment of the needs of the community, particularly the youth, they kept true to this statement by embarking on an ambitious plan to construct their new 11,500-square-foot facility at a cost of

\$1.5 million. Located at the corner of Weber and Ottawa Streets in Kitchener, the new community centre will offer its congregation a meeting space, tutoring programs for children struggling in school, a seniors' centre, a food bank outlet, a daycare centre, an after-school program and a place for local youth to call home.

I have had the honour of attending a number of events at the Church of God, including the groundbreaking for this new facility in late 2003, and want to congratulate their pastor, Reverend Canute Riggan, and all the church members for their hard work over the past year and a half in making this dream a reality. I look forward to attending the official opening and celebrating this important achievement for the people of Waterloo region.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Yesterday I rose and thanked the minister for trickling down some money to help our farmers. Our tobacco farmers got 70% of the money they were promised. Though a good start, it is, quite frankly, not enough—not enough for last year, not enough for this year and not enough for the future.

I also asked the minister for the McGuinty government's plan for agriculture. The farmers of Ontario are still waiting. Our farmers are still at home, waiting and wondering, "Where is Ontario going? Will I have the money to put the crops in the ground?" Our farmers need a plan, and our farmers deserve a plan. I will ask again today, Minister: Where is the McGuinty government's plan for agriculture?

But wait; I hear news today that maybe a plan has been released, maybe the minister has put some ideas and thoughts on paper. After turning on the radio this morning, we heard the minister touting his plan for our tobacco farmers. What does the minister's plan for tobacco farmers include? A trickle of money and encouragement for our tobacco farmers to switch from tobacco and start growing alternative crops.

Then I read with interest Minister Peters' comments on www.cannabisnews.com and www.marijuana.com, where he advocates the growing of alternative crops. Frankly, the farmers of Ontario are concerned. It appears that the minister's plan is simply that those who are growing tobacco should now switch to alternative crops and everything will be well and good in the world.

The people at www.marijuana.com and those at www.hightimes.com are excited about this new plan, but it just is not good enough for Ontario's farmers.

KIDNEY HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge that March is Kidney Health Month and to applaud the efforts of the Kidney Foundation of Canada.

Kidney failure affects an average of three Ontarians every day. Many may not even know that they have chronic kidney disease until it's too late, when dialysis

treatments or a kidney transplant become their only chance for survival. Diabetes and high blood pressure are among the leading causes of chronic kidney disease and yet are so often preventable, and at the very least treatable, if they are caught early.

It's crucial that we prevent and, when necessary, treat diabetes and high blood pressure so that full kidney function can be preserved. During Kidney Health Month, the kidney foundation will deliver a series of programs to educate Ontarians on kidney disease and, more specifically, its leading causes. Among some of the programs are public health forums, community health fairs, speakers' bureaus and blood pressure screening clinics.

Through the efforts of the kidney foundation, I'm pleased to announce that over 250 people were tested in Brampton for high blood pressure, demonstrating their commitment to taking a proactive approach to their health.

I congratulate the Kidney Foundation of Canada on providing their untiring service to my community and to the people of this province.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I rise in the House today to call attention to something that was said this morning on the Dean Blundell show on 102.1, The Edge, in Toronto. On his show this morning, radio host Dean Blundell expressed shock, saying, "Something has just happened here. A politician has kept his promise. We have to applaud." Dean Blundell was referring to the fact that our leader, John Tory, showed up at The Edge this morning to make good on a promise that if he won the by-election in Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey, he would personally deliver breakfast to the early morning hosts.

It's a sad state of affairs indeed that after only 18 months in office, breaking promise after promise, the McGuinty government has succeeded in lowering the expectations of Ontario to rock bottom. Well, folks, I've got good news for you: We have a new leader in Ontario, one who is not the kind of politician who is going to promise something, anything, just to gain people's favour and get elected, then shrug it off after as electioneering. If John Tory says he will do something, he will do just that. Regardless of the nature of the promise, his word can be counted on. That applies today and it applies tomorrow.

This is a refreshing change in the province of Ontario. Dean Blundell said, "I'm rooting for you and I want you to be our next Premier." Millions of Ontarians are saying exactly that.

GAMBLING

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals sure have a strange way of helping problem gamblers with their gambling problems. Today we discovered that the Premier's election Web

site—you remember it—www.choosechange.ca—has been transformed into an on-line casino.

Thanks to Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, gambling addicts can get their betting fix with a click of a few keys: www.choosechange.ca. Visitors to www.choosechange.ca have the option of playing Vegas Craps, European Roulette, video poker games like Aces and Faces Power Poker, Double Bonus Video Poker, video slots like Big Kahuna, progressive games like Lotsa Loot, and real slot games like Jackpot Express, Reels Royce and Wheel of Wealth.

Our discovery of the transformation of the McGuinty Liberals' www.choosechange.ca Web site into an on-line casino comes on the same day as the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. holds a press conference here at Queen's Park, with the lacklustre snow job around this government's non-commitment to problem gaming.

Look, gambling addiction is a very serious matter. Problem gamblers need help to stop gambling, not help finding new ways to bet their money, relationships and lives away. New Democrats are going to keep on fighting to ensure that problem gambling receives the attention it deserves, for a change.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'm very pleased to report to this House that today the region of York has approved expending \$2 million to promote Viva, the new name for the public transportation system in the region of York. Viva will start an ad campaign in a few days, with the intent to target our working and student population to significantly increase ridership.

Viva will run 18 hours a day. Fares will remain the same, and the region of York ridership will be able to connect easily to Brampton public transit, three subway stations and four GO links, as the region tries to create a transit culture. This is good news. This is a region that is trying its best to move forward.

The Viva ridership will enjoy bus stops that are outfitted with ticket-vending machines and satellite hookups that will inform waiting riders of the real arrival time and when to expect the next bus. This will increase ridership and create a demand that only a subway can satisfy. The Spadina-York subway extension, the Yonge Street subway extension as well as an extension into the town of Markham will service this need.

I wish to congratulate the government of the day, the region of York and our Minister of Transportation for their support of public transportation in the region of York in the province of Ontario.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure today to rise and tell the House about a reception I held in Oakville recently to honour the tremendous efforts of the Canadian Mental Health Association in Halton

region. The reception included board members; community mental health partners; councillor Keith Bird, the newly elected police board chair in the region of Halton; and councillors Elgar and Sandelowsky from the town of Oakville.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to officially announce the funding in my riding of Oakville on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, because mental health has been ignored for far too long by previous governments. Halton region received an over \$1-million investment by the McGuinty government to help more people with mental illness in the region of Halton. Contrast this with the NDP cut to funding for mental health of over \$23 million in 1992-93 and \$42.4 million in 1994-95. And throughout their entire eight years in office, the Tories failed to increase community-based mental health programs in this province. We invested over \$1 million in the region of Halton. Overall, this government is proud to have invested over \$65 million this year in community-based mental health services. You can just imagine how pleased those people in the region of Halton are at this government's keeping another promise.

MUNICIPAL FIRE SERVICES

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I'm proud to stand up today to reiterate that the McGuinty government is making available a critical \$30-million one-time Ontario fire service training grant that will be distributed to 385 municipalities throughout Ontario. We are ensuring that our rural communities get a fair deal and the investments they deserve. The funding will help fire departments meet their training needs and purchase new equipment. This significant funding is unprecedented. I'd like to commend Minister Kwinter for his work on this file. It's the single largest contribution invested by a provincial government for fire services.

The era of Conservative slash-and-burn policies is over. The Conservatives used their infamous Magna budget to announce \$40 million for fire departments. I'd like to clarify something for the member from Simcoe North: Your government failed to follow through on your worthless IOU. The truth is, we have made the investment to train and help protect our firefighters. We have followed through on our commitment to firefighters, and you did not.

Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association president Fred LeBlanc, who is a friend of mine, stated, "We are pleased with this announcement as it contains the necessary flexibility to reflect the diversity of Ontario's fire service." He went on to say, "The Liberal government has listened to the members of the OPFFA regarding this much-needed funding and has taken an important step to provide the financial opportunity to enhance current capabilities and introduce much-needed services to meet the public's expectations."

Ontario's firefighters know the difference between a Tory IOU and a Liberal bank deposit.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): That requires unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Marchese and Mr. Prue exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Marchese assumes ballot item 75 and Mr. Prue assumes ballot item 62; and that pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 60.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. There is a disturbing case that happens to be in my riding of a man charged in the first-degree murder of his wife who is set to be released on bail pending his trial. The man is alleged to have shot his wife in the school parking lot where she taught during the course of the day. For the sake of concerns about public safety, will the Premier instruct his Attorney General to order the crown attorneys to immediately appeal this bail ruling?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, there is a publication ban in connection with this matter and I know we have to be—and I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition would want to be—very, very careful in terms of how we address this particular matter. It is not my intention to instruct the Attorney General to do anything in connection with this particular case. We leave it to the individuals involved, the crown attorneys involved, to take the necessary and appropriate steps.

Mr. Tory: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to handle the matter in exactly the manner that the Premier suggested. I went today to Bolton because, as I mentioned, this community is in my constituency, and I took the opportunity to meet with some of the neighbours and people in that community living nearby the house where the man will be set to return if the bail order is carried out. The house is one minute away from two schools, and literally seconds away from a public park.

The neighbours are not questioning the gentleman's right to a fair trial. What they are questioning is the fact that they don't have the right to know what compelling information it was that caused an exception to be created in this case for someone charged with first-degree murder to be let out on bail and to return to his house during the course of the time between now and his trial.

Would the Premier agree with me that in extraordinary cases like this where it's a first-degree murder charge and bail is granted, it is reasonable that the public should have the right to know? You made reference to the publication ban. The public should have the right to know. The neighbours and the people in the community have the right to know the information that led to that somewhat unusual order.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I'm sensitive to the fact that a publication ban is in place. I have—as has the Leader of the Opposition—not been made privy to the reasons behind that, to the arguments that were made. I can tell you that the crown did, in fact, oppose bail. This is not a matter in which we intend to jump in and to begin to lend direction to the prosecution of individual criminal trials in the province of Ontario.

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Mr. Tory: I say with respect, Premier, that that's not good enough, in this sense: What I asked you just a moment ago was whether you shared my view that people who live in this neighbourhood, people who go to this school, people who are the next-door neighbours and who use the park that the man's back yard is connected to, that it's reasonable for them to have an explanation as to the circumstances in which this bail was granted. Would you do anything you can, or ask your Attorney General to do anything he can, in order to make sure that the public, the people in this neighbourhood, have the right to that information so they can know why an extraordinary order like this has been made? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I think the member opposite is treading on thin ice. I think there is a clear separation between the proceedings in this institution, the institution itself, and our courts, and I respect that distinction. I think it is inappropriate for us to speak about a matter that is presently before the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Tory: The Attorney General is here, I see. I'll ask my question nonetheless of the Premier. I think it is perfectly appropriate because the laws are made in this chamber, and a lot of the programs pursuant to which people are monitored are decided upon in this chamber or by the government. I think it's perfectly appropriate, on behalf of the people in this neighbourhood and indeed on behalf of the people of Ontario, that I should ask this question. My question is—

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would refer you to standing order 22 (g), "Rules of Debate":

“(g) Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding

“(i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination, or

“(ii) that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature,

“where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding.”

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, subject to my reading of standing order 22(g), if in fact this line of questioning is in order.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The government House leader has raised a point of order, which he is certainly entitled to do during question period. I would first like to ask if you could reset the clock to the time he got up, as is normally the case when the government interrupts question period, as he's perfectly entitled to do. Could I get a ruling on that? Then I'll speak to the main issue.

The Speaker: I'll take the point of order, and I will let the clock continue.

Mr. Baird: Mr. Speaker, there's a certain private member's resolution on the order paper as we speak that raises some very serious challenges with respect to your capacity to be able to render decisions. I'd like to raise, as a point of order in response to the government House leader, how long you think it's fair and appropriate to make judgments like that while there is a motion currently on the order paper that questions your capacity to make fair and reasonable decisions. It always has been the case with every Speaker since I have been here that when the government has a point of order—

The Speaker: I am just wondering if the member for Nepean–Carleton is questioning my decision. The member raised a point of order. I have to listen. I don't know how long this point of order would be, and I wanted to rule. You enter a new discussion on this altogether. So it is on that point that I've made it. But are you questioning the fact that I should not rule that way?

Mr. Baird: I'm questioning whether it is appropriate that a motion be on the order paper; whether the Clerk's table would advise you whether it's appropriate that an order be on the order paper which questions your ability to do it—is it fair and reasonable that in an unquestioned, unbelievable ruling, you would allow the clock to roll while the government House leader stands during question period? Every Speaker, going back 25, 50 years in this province, has always stopped the clock.

I will speak to the main issue.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member's putting a point. I don't want to hear any shouting back and forth. He's put a point and I want to hear it. I'm asking again, are you questioning my ruling on this?

Mr. Baird: I will speak to the main issue, Mr. Speaker, the issue of bail.

With respect to the standing order, with respect to the rules of debate under section 22, as referenced by the government House leader, the issue is no longer before the court. The judge has made his ruling with respect to bail being offered. That is number one.

Number two, the substance of the question by the Leader of the Opposition asked not necessarily about this case specifically, but in cases similar to this, is it fair that individuals living in the vicinity—parents of school children and parents of children in daycare, neighbours, people who would be concerned about community safety in the community of Bolton—would have the right to have information with respect to why a judicial decision would be made?

This decision is not before the courts. The judge has ruled; the case is over. It's time that we get a little bit of accountability from this government on a serious issue with respect to public security.

The Speaker: It seems to me that this matter continues to raise this point of order. I will consider whether or not this extended time—we'd have to extend some more time to question period.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We would seek unanimous consent to stop the clock and allow this—

The Speaker: The fact is, I have actually stated that I'm considering that, since there are many members who are getting up and debating this point. I will tell, at the end of the time, how much time I will give to this—extended time.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If I may draw your attention to standing order 23, which was referred to, it very specifically says “in debate,” which clearly indicates that it is not applicable to question period but rather to the course of debate during orders of the day. Question period is separate.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): That's a very strange argument.

Mr. Kormos: Read the standing order, sir. Standing order 23 says, “In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she” etc., etc. Furthermore, the sub judge rule is qualified by the observation in the standing orders, “where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding.”

One, the question put to the Premier and/or Attorney General can in no way prejudice any subsequent proceeding. To suggest that would be to suggest that somehow our provincial judges or superior court judges, who will eventually have carriage of this matter, could be swayed.

Secondly, I concur in the observation that the court that dealt with bail is functus. The decision regarding bail is over. The matter of bail is therefore no longer before the court.

Finally, standing order 23 clearly applies to debate and debate only.

The Speaker: I've listened carefully—

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a new point.

The Speaker: Are you continuing on the same point of order?

Ms. Churley: Before you rule, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make another point that I think hasn't been made—and I'm a little puzzled by your ruling. I've raised in this House—hear me out for just a moment—very similar questions which have not been ruled out of order. The province is responsible for the administration of the bail system, and it can make policies that would prevent more women from being murdered because of domestic violence. I've talked and asked questions on the heels of two women who were murdered by men who were free on bail. I asked specifically about those cases at that time, and it was not ruled out of order. Mr. Speaker, there is no difference. At those times, you did not rule the question out of order, and the question that has been asked today in that context is no different.

1400

The Speaker: Thank you. I want to thank the members for their input and I just want to address the last point. I have not ruled the question out of order. I did not at that time itself. As I said, I listened very carefully to the question being put. Furthermore, I'm not in a position to know all the court cases that are going on today to know what is relevant or not to that case. The fact is that the minister may respond accordingly, whether or not he feels that way. That is the way I would come down on that ruling. The ruling I have, then, is that I don't think the question is out of order and it can proceed in that form. If there are no other comments, and I don't think there needs to be any other comment on that, I will also say that I will roll the clock back to 55 minutes within the time of the question period.

Mr. Tory: I'll ask my second question of the Attorney General. I should say to the Attorney General that I tried, notwithstanding the suggestion to the contrary by the Premier, to handle my question in a businesslike way and I think the way people would expect a question like this to be asked, because it is on the minds of a lot of people, and it's certainly on the minds of the people I met with this morning. I met the neighbours and they have a very genuine concern about the man's rights, the accused's rights, in this case, but so do they have concerns about safety and security in their own neighbourhood.

Will the Attorney General confirm what the Premier said, what I believe him to have said, which is that your offices will not be appealing this bail ruling, and if not, why not?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Firstly, everybody can check the transcript; that is not what the Premier said.

There are two matters that are before the courts. One is the bail finding, which can be reviewed to the Chief Justice of Ontario on a bail review. We are working as quickly and as diligently as possible so that we can make

a determination on whether we will be making a bail review. We should be able to—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The former Attorney General wants me to just do it without having any information before me, and, I'm sorry, I won't do that, sir.

Secondly, obviously on matters of such a serious charge as this, the crown always, always, typically opposes bail in these circumstances. If you are going to ask me, though, to speak to the specific arguments made on the bail hearing, I simply cannot, because they are subject to a publication ban. Mr. Tory may want me to violate the publication ban, but I won't.

Mr. Tory: Again, that was not my question. My question to the Premier and my question now to you is whether you think it is appropriate that members of the public should, in some way or other—and that you might use some efforts within your purview or that of the Parliament of Canada to assist people in having the reasons at their disposal in somewhat extraordinary cases like this, where someone charged with first-degree murder is going to be returned to a neighbourhood that has two schools within a one-minute walk and a park connected to the backyard of the accused person. Do you think it is worth some of your time to find a way in which in cases like this the public can understand undoubtedly what must have been some reasons put before the judge that led him to make the decision? Do you think that would be a worthwhile effort for you to make?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I would say that if we're going to talk about general reforms to the Criminal Code in order to make our communities safer, I absolutely will be happy to continue to engage in that effort. If you have any specific suggestions, I say to the member opposite, I would be happy to bring them forward to the Minister of Justice.

On the specific case that is before us, bail hearings are subject to a publication ban. I cannot discuss the arguments. We will be able to provide you, within a matter of days, our position as to whether or not we will engage in a bail review to the Chief Justice of Ontario.

In the interim, the effort to interfere with the discretion of a judge, of a crown attorney and of a chief legal officer is inappropriate. Bill Davis would never have picked up the phone and told Roy McMurtry what to do. Dalton McGuinty doesn't do that with me, and I won't take any instructions from Mr. Tory.

Mr. Tory: In fact, my last question was to ask you if you would pick up your own phone and do something about this review. I trust the Attorney General will inform the House at such time as determination has been made as to whether this review will be undertaken or not.

My final supplementary to the Attorney General is this: Since you are willing, and I appreciate that, to take a look at what you might do in this and other areas in terms of better information being made available to the public and to neighbours and schoolchildren and families like this, would you also inform us what changes might have been made to the use of electronic monitoring? It was our

understanding that under the previous government it was put in place only for offenders who were not a risk to society, and it now seems to have been extended to someone, in this case, who is charged with a very serious crime. Can you confirm whether or not there's been a change of policy with respect to the use of electronic monitoring?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Again, the position, the practice and policy of the crown would not be to support some electronic monitoring in a matter involving a first-degree murder charge. The practice and policy of the crown would be to oppose bail—period. The specifics of the arguments that we made are subject to a publication ban, but the policy that the crown takes in cases involving such a serious charge as this is to do everything we can to protect the public, and we will continue to do that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, you will know that during the first year of your government the northern Ontario economy lost 6,000 jobs. Over the last few months, I've spent a lot of time meeting with forest industry workers, company managers and municipal leaders in communities where they're very worried that their paper mill, their pulp mill, their sawmill may close, and with it the loss of hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs.

At the same time, they've seen the McGuinty government invest \$500 million in an auto sector investment strategy to sustain jobs, \$125 million a year in the television and movie production industry to sustain jobs, \$400 million in the Windsor Casino to sustain jobs, yet your government seems to have no investment strategy for the north; in fact, your hydro policy is actually killing jobs, because, for example, of the 12% increase in hydro rates. Premier, can you tell me, do you think increasing hydro rates for industry by 12% just this spring will be good for the pulp mill industry, the paper mill industry, the sawmill industry in northern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The Premier of Ontario, his northern development minister, his economic development minister and his energy minister have met with every one of those paper mills and with the unions that represent the workers. We are appointing an industrial cogeneration facilitator to help deal with the real problems that are faced by that industry, by that sector, not only in Ontario; I will remind you that it's an industry and sector that's going through challenges all over the world. Electricity is clearly a challenge for them. There is no doubt about that. The softwood lumber issue is a challenge for them. The amount of wood available is a challenge for them. There are a number of challenges that are there.

The Premier has led the effort within our government, in co-operation with all the ministers involved, in

working with those industries. On the electricity side, we've appointed an industrial cogeneration facilitator. That individual will be announced soon. The industry has told us that they believe that will be an important step to help them deal with energy issues they are confronted with on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier would know that in fact many of these companies—Abitibi, for example, is investing in their paper mills in Quebec; they're investing in their paper mills in British Columbia. Tembec is investing in their paper mill in Manitoba. Many of these companies are investing where they have paper mills in the United States. But here in Ontario they have stopped investing, and the reason they have stopped investing is because your government has raised the industrial price for electricity to a point where they believe it will be very difficult to sustain these mills. Now, I asked you, do you think raising the price of electricity for paper mills and pulp mills is a good idea? You didn't seem to answer, but I want to ask you this as well: Since you have an investment strategy to sustain jobs in the auto sector, since you have an investment strategy to sustain jobs in the movie and television sector, since you have an investment strategy to sustain jobs in the Windsor Casino, where is the McGuinty government's investment strategy to sustain jobs in a forest sector that clearly needs some help at this time?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Natural Resources.

1410

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank my colleague for the referral.

As the member knows, in November, I established a competitive forest sector minister's council. I have now received the interim report. I needed that before the end of April because of the urgency of the situation. We are going through that right now and I will be making recommendations to cabinet on how to respond.

Mr. Hampton: It's fine for the McGuinty government to do a study, but you had no trouble announcing an investment strategy for the auto sector. You had no trouble announcing a \$400-million investment strategy for the Windsor casino to sustain jobs.

Here we have mills actually closing down. I was in Smooth Rock Falls—more layoffs coming. I was in Terrace Bay—150 people have lost their jobs. Many of these will be younger families, which will ripple through the health care system and the education system. In Dryden, where they've lost over 300 jobs, they have found, for example, that the economic activity has declined by \$21 million, the Ontario Works caseload is up by 40% and usage at the local food bank is up by 30%. This is happening already. There are more mill closures possible in Kenora and Thunder Bay. They're worried in Sault Ste. Marie and Kapuskasing.

I say again to the Premier, where is your investment strategy for forest industry communities when they really need it?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I would like to refer the question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Let's set the record straight here. Employment in northern Ontario increased from January 2004 to January 2005. Some 4,400 new jobs have been created in the north since January 2005.

Let me compare the record of the NDP government. In northeastern Ontario, the number of people working in the forestry, mining, oil and gas industries plummeted from 27,700 to 21,700 between 1990 and 1995.

Our government has been very aggressive with its northern prosperity plan, a plan that includes northerners in the decision-making. We have been very active with our grow bonds pilot project. We are providing northerners with the tools necessary to ensure that there is sustainable growth in northern Ontario for the first time since 1990.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier might want to read his own economic statement issued at the end of November, which details the loss of 6,000 jobs in northern Ontario.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question now is, as we know, tomorrow is April Fool's Day. It's a day when traditionally people play tricks, so I want to reflect on one of this government's more infamous tricks: the \$3.9-billion Enron-style accounting trick. I wonder if the Premier can tell the people of Ontario, exactly what does your government think it was accomplishing by trying a \$3.9-billion accounting trick on the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Finance would like to speak to this.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Just to tell the leader of the third party, when we presented our budget in this House back on May 18 of last year, I reported the fact that the deficit would be \$6 billion for the current year but that there was a one-time accounting gain of \$3.9 billion that would be recorded in the year and reduce that deficit to \$2.2 billion.

I said that at the time based on energy policies that were at that time in the process of development. My good friend the Minister of Energy brought that plan to this Parliament through Bill 100 and announcements in February of this year. As a result of the details of that announcement, we revisited how we would record that revenue gain and determined that the more cautious and prudent way of recording that gain would be over the course of 10 years.

Mr. Hampton: The real trick was that the provincial Auditor General caught you in your Enron-style accounting trick and said, "You can't do this." In fact, I want the Minister of Finance to know that people at Enron are going to jail for those kinds of accounting tricks.

I want to ask you about another trick, because as of tomorrow there will be another hydroelectricity rate increase. I want to ask the Premier about his promise where he said that the McGuinty government was going to freeze electricity rates. But as of tomorrow, most people will have experienced a 34% increase in electricity rates since the election. Can the Premier tell the people of Ontario what was in his mind in terms of that little trick?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I will refer the matter to the Minister of Energy, who will speak on energy pricing.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Average Ontarians will not experience a 34% increase in electricity prices. That's just wrong. Go to the OEB and check what the real numbers are.

First of all, that government raised energy prices 40%, so I don't need a lecture from that member about electricity prices. Everything that should have been up when they were in power was down. Generation went down, they cancelled Conawapa, and now they're lecturing this government. Last year, he predicted a 34% price increase. It hasn't come true. Now he's trying to make it a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The fact is that wholesale electricity prices in Ontario are down 19% since we took office. What's different about what we're doing is that we're not trying to mislead people about what the real price of electricity is. They were paying for it on their taxes. That is, people of relatively modest means were subsidizing large consumers. We have taken a—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The only thing that's been misleading is a Premier who said he was going to freeze electricity rates, and now we've seen a cumulative increase of 34%.

I want to ask about another trick, and this trick was the promise not to cut health care services. As of tomorrow, hundreds of thousands of Ontarians will lose access to essential physiotherapy treatment. It will no longer be covered by OHIP, just as hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have lost access to chiropractic treatments. They'll have to pay for it out of their own pockets, just as people have to pay out of their own pockets to visit an optometrist. That was quite a trick. Can the Premier tell the people of Ontario what he had in mind with that promise and then those subsequent tricks?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I'll refer that to the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'll take the opportunity that the honourable member presents to remind all members of this House and Ontarians watching from home that this government's investments in health care in fiscal 2004-05 total nearly \$3 billion. That's meant enhanced services across the broadest range of those provided.

With respect specifically to physiotherapy, I was very pleased last week that we were able to announce our physiotherapy program, which includes services for seniors—all those 65 and over, in a variety of circum-

stances—all those aged 19 or under; residents of long-term-care homes, who have heretofore not been receiving appropriate levels of care; people of all ages needing short-term access to physiotherapy in their home or through a community care access centre; people of all ages requiring physiotherapy after overnight hospitalization; and people of all ages receiving physiotherapy who are recipients of the Ontario disability support program, Ontario Works and family benefits.

This is further evidence that this government is putting the money of the people of Ontario where they want to see services; that is, restoring the essential services, including health care—\$2.9 billion in new money.

1420

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Ontario's electronic surveillance program was designed to deal with low-risk offenders. Can you tell us, given the court's order to electronically monitor someone charged with first-degree murder, when the program was expanded to include high-risk offenders?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The issuance of electronic surveillance equipment is determined by the parole board. This person is not on parole—this person is out on bail—and as a result, my ministry has no input or influence on what happens in that situation.

Mr. Dunlop: This sounds like an automatic grounds for an appeal: a court attempting to force expansion of a program designed around public safety and accurate assessment. How can you allow this to happen? Will you encourage your Premier and your Attorney General to ensure that the bail condition is revoked in this particular case?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: As I said before, this is a decision of the courts. There is a publication ban on it. It is not my role to interfere with that at this stage. We have protocols for dealing with it, and this particular instance does not fit within that protocol.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto–Danforth): I have a question to the Premier. A man who is being charged with first-degree murder will be released on bail. He has been charged with murdering his wife in broad daylight, and people across Ontario are outraged that, a few short months after this hideous crime, the accused will be allowed to return home. When a man accused of such a horrific crime is let out of jail on bail, women in this province are left wondering whether the justice system works for them at all.

Premier, I ask you, what kind of message do you think this sends to abused women today across Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): For reasons already given, I'm not going to get into the details of this, because we are

prohibited to do so, and it would be inappropriate to do so. Let me speak to the generalities.

Under our government's domestic violence action plan, we are making real and concrete efforts to strengthen the justice system. Currently, here are some of the things we are doing:

Assessing restraining orders and enforcement of breaches: The Ministry of the Attorney General is developing standardized provisions for restraining orders to provide consistency of practice across the province.

As well, we are running pilot tests of the Ontario domestic assault risk assessment tool. These began in January of this year in North Bay and Ottawa. Police, crown attorneys and others in the justice system are using the ODARA tool to identify and better assess risk in abusive situations.

Ms. Churley: Well, Premier, that is the key, isn't it? A pilot project.

One year ago today, the coroner released his domestic violence death review committee report, which talked about what needs to be done to prevent violence against women. The report's anniversary is not being marked with some follow-through on the recommendations it made. Instead, a man who has been charged with killing his wife outside her place of work will be let out of jail on bail.

Recently, in February, we saw, within a span of a week and a half, two women in the GTA killed by men who were instructed not to contact them. These incidents reflect a system that is indifferent to violence against women and that is putting women unnecessarily at risk.

Last year at this time, the coroner advised you on how to overhaul the bail system so women are protected from violence.

I ask you, Premier: A pilot project is not good enough. Will you announce today that you will immediately implement all of the coroner's recommendations so that this kind of thing doesn't happen in Ontario ever again?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The justice system of which the member is so obviously very critical is one that she and her government helped lend shape to, as did the subsequent Tory government. We believe that there are some real issues in this matter. I've outlined some of the steps that we have taken thus far.

I'm also proud to report that the very first federal-provincial-territorial meeting to contend specifically with justice and women's issues is going to be sponsored by our government this spring. It's going to be chaired by our minister responsible for women's issues, Sandra Pupatello, and that, I think, lends some insight into the steps that we are taking to raise the profile of this issue and to ensure that women and children who find themselves victimized by these kinds of crimes are awarded the appropriate protections that they deserve.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay–Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Natural

Resources. As you know, earlier this month Neenah Paper in Terrace Bay announced the closure of their No. 1 mill, which will result in the loss of over 130 jobs, obviously a huge blow to the families affected by the layoffs and certainly bad news for the communities of Terrace Bay and Schreiber. I'm grateful that earlier today, you and Northern Development Minister Bartolucci could meet with Terrace Bay mayor Mike King and Schreiber mayor Don McArthur to discuss this challenging situation; in fact, I'm glad to greet mayors McArthur and King, who are here in the Legislature today.

While it's difficult to provide reassurances to the communities at a time like this, I know we are hopeful that the province will be working closely with the company to maintain, if not enhance, the mill as they focus on stabilizing their remaining operation. That being the case, can you give us some assurance that you are working closely with the company to ensure that their remaining operations are viable now and into the future?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member very much for his hard work on behalf of his communities, and we are obviously saddened when we hear of any job loss in any sector of the economy. I was able to say to the mayors today, about my meeting three weeks ago with the company and from their officials from head office in Atlanta, that I gave some ideas to the company on how I thought they could have more efficient forestry operations that, in turn, would start to lower their delivered wood cost, which I know is a challenge to their operations. We went on to speak about the future investments the company could make there. I think there is going to be a bright future for the two communities with Neenah Paper, and I think we will be able to sustain the 720 jobs in the mill and in the woodlands from here on in.

Mr. Gravelle: I'm certainly encouraged by your optimism regarding the No. 2 machine at Neenah specifically, and I think I can probably safely include mayors McArthur and King in their reaction to that as well. Having said that, there are many other challenges facing the communities as a result of these major job losses that are taking place, challenges we need to work on over the short and long term. While I appreciate that there are other ministries that may be involved in helping us meet these challenges, is there any provincial assistance you could point toward that might soften the blow of these job losses?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: It's interesting to note—we have all been going over the release of this new program, the Ontario municipal partnership fund, which my colleague, Minister Sorbara, announced today. Particularly, it is targeted to rural and northern communities to help them with the deficiencies they have in taxing—the lower assessment bases they have—and especially addressing situations that Terrace Bay and Schreiber have. It's certainly good news for those communities. This program targets funding for social programs and policing costs for small northern and rural communities in recog-

nition of these challenges. The McGuinty government recognizes that northern Ontario faces different obstacles than southern Ontario, and we are making sure these differences are addressed. By taking this very proactive approach, we are working to strengthen these local communities and bring a prosperous future for northern Ontario.

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Will you release the list of individuals that you or your political staff met with concerning the greenbelt since December 16, 2003?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know this member has dedicated himself to tearing apart the greenbelt. He has never agreed with our plan and, indeed, our delivering on unprecedented legislation that protects 1.8 million acres in perpetuity.

Now there is a particular developer—Mr. DeGasperi—who is very unhappy that we will not take his land out of the greenbelt. What I would like to hear from this member is an unconditional commitment on his part that under no circumstances will that developer's land be taken out of the greenbelt.

Mr. Hudak: Premier, you do everything possible to avoid answering the most simple questions about who you met with, what developers you met with, what lobbyists or developers you met with, and I do object to your greenbelt plan when it has the appearance of selling exemptions for political fundraising, as appears to have happened with a \$15-million windfall for one developer who was at your soiree at \$10,000 per person. In your greenbelt plan, some landowners are more equal than others. Landowners who have Liberal connections get exemptions, while farmers like Thomas Kugler, who is trying to grow grapes in Niagara-on-the-Lake, are getting stonewalled by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Your own minister had a value judgment that it was improper to meet with developers, and you violated that value judgment Lord knows how many times.

Premier, come clean. Just answer me yes or no. Are you going to release a list of the developers, the lobbyists and the individuals you or your staff met with on the greenbelt?

1430

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: This member is against the greenbelt, pure and simple. I think that's pretty direct. You've got to ask yourself what could be motivating him in this matter. I know there is a reception being held for John Tory on Tuesday, April 5. It's by special invitation only. There is an organizing committee. One of the individuals on the organizing committee is Carlo DeGasperi, brother of Silvio DeGasperi, partner in the development firm.

So again I say to the member opposite and Ontarians at large that we are not taking Mr. DeGasperi's land out of the greenbelt. I want to know, on behalf of the people

of Ontario, whether this member or this leader is prepared to make the very same commitment that that land belongs in and shall stay in the greenbelt.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: If I may, you had ruled the other day that you couldn't pound on your desk. Have you changed that ruling when it comes to Liberal members, sir?

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I will rule as I see it. I don't think it's a point of order.

New question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Last week the federal government made it very easy for you to get at \$250 million in federal funding for affordable housing, absolutely easy. That money has been sitting in a vault in a bank in Ottawa since 2002, and it can now be used not only for housing but for other things such as rent supplements. Put bluntly, your government should be ashamed of itself for having done nothing. At a time when hundred of thousands of Ontarians are in need of affordable housing, your government has consistently refused to honour its obligation under the 2002 accord to match federal dollars. As a result, almost no affordable housing is being built in this province, and the federal money remains unspent.

Mr. Minister, will you do the right thing for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians and match the federal housing funds immediately, and finally do something about the crisis that so many Ontario families are facing?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I'm delighted to answer the question. Quite contrary to what the member has just presented to the House, the facts are quite a bit different. In fact, since October 2003, our government has supported funding and announced funding. We've had shovels go into the ground for over 3,400 units of affordable housing in the province. That is the single largest housing expansion for affordable housing in over a decade.

Unlike the approach taken by the NDP government, heavily criticized by the Provincial Auditor, we have brought considerable dollars; we have engaged the stakeholders; we have worked with our municipal partners. In fact, I had the opportunity to attend, with Mayor David Miller and former federal minister of housing Andy Scott, to announce that kind of expansion.

It is an exciting time in the province of Ontario. I look forward to much more, and I look forward to answering more in the supplementary.

Mr. Prue: Let me remind you of just some of the promises that your government made during the 2003 election. You promised not 3,000 but 20,000 new housing units for needy families. You promised a housing allowance for low-income people directed to 35,000 families. You promised 6,600 units of new supportive housing. Almost none of that has come to pass in your

first 18 months in office. You were supposed to be able to do this by matching federal funds under the 2002 agreement. Now the federal government is making it easy for you, and we have suggestions from the Premier that you may not be going along with it. What I want to know is, and I'll ask you again, are you going to honour your commitment to match federal housing funds as you promised in the last election, or is this to be just another Liberal McGuinty broken promise?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: We have made significant strides. Some 3,400 units of affordable housing is no mean feat and is, in fact, the single largest housing expansion in over a decade, and there is more to come.

As we indicated in our budget of May 18—unfortunately, not supported by the member opposite—some \$85 million was dedicated to support affordable housing. Of course, some of that was federal dollars and some was provincial. As we have worked with the federal government, we are putting much of their funding up front.

We are in the advanced stage of doing our capital planning for future years in the province of Ontario, and I very much look forward to the finance minister presenting our budget outlining the hospital projects, the affordable housing projects, the education capital funding, post-secondary, transportation and the like. I look forward to also engaging the federal government and working in partnership with them as we have so far in delivering 3,400 units, delivering a rent bank, and delivering second-stage housing. It is good news in the province of Ontario that a Dalton McGuinty government is, in fact, being very focused and delivering on this commitment.

OMA AGREEMENT

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We were all pleased yesterday when Ontario's doctors overwhelmingly supported the deal with the Ontario Medical Association. This agreement will help to transform the health care system and enhance patient care in this province. We appreciate that you are able to keep, and in some cases enhance, the incentives in the original agreement that made it so gutsy and groundbreaking.

Minister, will you take a few moments, please, to remind the people in this House and across the province why this agreement benefits the people of Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to repeat what the honourable member said, which is that all of the key programs we negotiated in the first tentative agreement were retained in the subsequent agreement and many were made a great deal better. Primary amongst those is the elimination of billing thresholds, which have been a particular challenge for patients wanting to see our ophthalmologists, cardiologists, internal medicine specialists, specialist GPs and radiologists.

In addition, I could highlight a few of the benefits that Ontarians will see, and quite soon too: a premium for care for our seniors, which has been a particular chal-

lenge, coming into force in October 2005; a new house call fee and telephone consultation fee for palliative care, coming into effect in October 2005; a chronic disease management incentive to help manage diabetes, a very significant challenge in our health care system, coming into effect in April 2006; and work that's important to help patients prevent disease in the very first place, coming into effect in April 2006: new smoking cessation counselling incentives and colorectal screening and self-care counselling incentives—all part of our package designed to keep people healthier in the first place.

Ms. Matthews: Minister, over the past 12 years we have seen the number of people who do not have access to a family doctor soar to a million, caused in the most part by cuts in medical school spots by the NDP and compounded by the inaction of the Conservative government when they were in power. In fact, during the time the Progressive Conservative Party was in office, we saw the number of underserved areas in this province balloon from 60 to 142.

People in all parts of the province need to have access to a family doctor. We know that increased access to family doctors strengthens primary care and results in reduced visits to emergency rooms. What does this agreement do to attract doctors to underserved and rural areas?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It is true what the honourable member said, that it's the cruel legacy of those two parties while in government that communities across Ontario have been left without access to these crucial doctors. Apart from the incentive to join and to practise in interdisciplinary family health teams, we have an expansion of alternative payment plans, which helps to provide stable income that's not sensitive to volumes. That's particularly important in rural and northern communities. We have new funding for a northern specialist alternative funding plan. This is also very important as the northern Ontario medical school comes to life this September to assist with the clinical roles, and for the first time ever, a rurality gradient incentive, which really is designed to recognize that not all underserved communities are the same in the sense that some have access to much greater services in places like hospitals.

I think it's well said by Ingrid Parkes, a Kenora municipal councillor and part of the NOW Alliance, that the tentative agreement is helpful and targeted at northern, rural and remote practice.

1440

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On Tuesday of this week, you tabled Bill 183 and employed the seldom-used tactic in this House of suggesting that the presence of representatives of the privacy commissioner's office, coupled with your assertions of the chief commissioner's interventions, have made Bill 183 a better bill. This unfortunate tactic does nothing to help

the broader community of Ontarians to understand this important bill. The truth is that the privacy commissioner has very serious concerns about the potential harm to thousands and thousands of Ontario residents—in fact, birth parents—whose rights are not protected in this legislation.

My question, Minister, is, why did you so clearly reject the sound legal advice from this province's highest authority on protecting the privacy rights of its citizens?

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I think it's important to note that what this government did on Tuesday in this House is introduce legislation that really is the best of its kind in the world. We are proud of a piece of legislation that has come forward, just as a proposed bill right now. We acknowledge that there will be very thoughtful consideration as it goes to hearings. We anticipate hearing from as many people as widely as we can, in a fairly succinct manner, so that we can bring the bill back in the House for second and third reading and passage of the bill. That's what we hope will happen.

Every time a bill is introduced in the House there will always be issues. This is a very difficult issue. That's why this has taken so many years to come forward, because it is very complicated. What I will tell the member opposite is this: When we began 18 months ago as a government, we had a notion of what this bill might be. Thanks to the intervention of the privacy commissioner, we were able to change what we thought would work well for everyone who is involved in adoption, the adopted children as well as birth parents.

Mr. Jackson: I'll set aside the notion—I don't think this tactic of conveying this as a best practice is fair, given the facts that surround this legislation. The truth can be found on the Information and Privacy Commissioner's own Web site, which says, "BC, Alberta and Newfoundland are the only three provinces where adoption legislation is applied retroactively, but even here, each of these provinces provides for disclosure vetoes for earlier adoptions—exactly what Commissioner Cavoukian is proposing that Ontario do. Nowhere in Canada are the rights of birth parents completely ignored."

My question to the minister is simply this: Why is it that you and your cabinet believe that the protections for birth mothers deemed absolutely necessary, culturally, 80 years ago are no longer necessary for some cultural groups who hold those cultural values and risks of cultural reprisals just as highly today in Ontario?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I hope I can start my answer with a question to the member opposite. I need to know where this individual is going to be on this bill. I need to know if the individual opposite is going to be in favour of opening adoption records for individuals who have waited since 1927 to understand what the United Nations conference on the child has said. They have said very clearly that children have a right to know who they are, where they come from. They have a right to this. We are very firmly standing on the rights of individuals to know

who they are and where they come from. We have made no bones about this.

I will say as well that we are very firmly on the side of retroactivity. We are talking about people who since 1927 have not had that opportunity. I appreciate that others want to do something that's quite easy and just go on a go-forward basis; I don't agree with that.

To the member opposite, I want to know, will you support the bill that was tabled in this House?

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Cynthia Cameron of London is in the gallery today. Her 14-year-old son, Jesse, suffered brain injury at birth, is hyperactive, has seizure disorders and severe autism. He's been on a waiting list for residential treatment in the London area since May 2002. In July 2004, when they could no longer care for Jesse at home, his parents were forced to give up temporary care of Jesse to the Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex in order to get him the group home placement he needs. He is now in residential care in Barrie. The temporary care agreement with the CAS ends on August 17. If Jesse isn't placed in London by then, his parents will be forced to give up custody altogether, just to ensure he will get the residential care he needs.

Minister, your office is well aware of this case. Will you enter into a special-needs agreement with Cynthia Cameron and her family so they don't have to give up custody of Jesse just to get the care he needs?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The family situation has indeed been brought to my attention and the mother's member of provincial Parliament, the Minister of Labour, has also talked to me about this situation.

In the first year of our government, I went across the province and listened to parents who had tragic stories, listened to agencies that did not have enough resources to treat children. That is why we invested, in the very first year, \$74 million more for children's mental health and special-needs services. We are building a system for the first time, a system that in the past was a patchwork of excellence but not an integrated system. Unfortunately, these things take time. I know that even waiting an extra day, never mind an extra year, is a lifetime for a family with special-needs children. I know this from my background. We are doing the best we can, and in my supplementary, I can continue with the specific situation.

Ms. Martel: The question was about this specific family, because your ministry has specifically been asked to enter into a special-needs agreement with this family. Your regional office has given no commitment to Cynthia that that indeed will be done. No family in Ontario should have to give up custody of their child just to get the special services that child needs, but that is the

very situation that is facing Cynthia Cameron if a placement is not found for her son in London by August. This is not a protection issue. That is not why this child went into care. The parents were forced to give temporary custody because they could no longer care for Jesse at home and he desperately needed a residential placement.

Cynthia Cameron needs your help now. She needs you to enter into a special agreement so she can get the care for Jesse that he needs and so she doesn't have to give up custody of her son to do that. I ask you again, Minister, because you are aware of this situation and we have had no guarantee from your ministry that this will happen, will you commit today that you will enter into a special-needs agreement with Cynthia Cameron so that Jesse can get the care he needs and she won't have to give up custody in order to do that?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I thank the member and I agree with the member that no family in this province, in this day and age, should have to consider giving up their child to get the help. I do agree. That is why we are working very hard to develop a system of children's services for special-needs children across the province. What I have done as a result of this and other situations that have been brought to my attention, specifically on these types of issues, is to ask the regional office in London, as well as the regional offices across the province, to get the community planning tables that had just met and just gave some innovative programming ideas, which we funded, back together again to look at these specific situations as quickly as possible, because no child should have to wait on a waiting list and no parent should have to give up their child to get help.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

FINANCES MUNICIPALES

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Earlier, the Minister of Natural Resources referred to the introduction of the Ontario municipal partnership fund. This fund will replace the old, broken CRF with a new, fairer model for our municipalities. This is good news for Nipissing. In Nipissing, the township of Bonfield will receive a 12% increase under this new program and the town of Callander will receive a 23% increase. The city of North Bay will see a \$2.5-million investment in transition and reconciliation funding this year. This is good news because most municipalities will receive more funding under OMPF and they will also benefit from a new model that is clear and transparent. We are providing what municipalities have been asking for in the context of our government's own fiscal challenges. Minister, could you outline for the House how this new program is going to benefit northern and rural communities?

1450

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): This is not only a good day for the riding of Nipissing and northern and rural Ontario; it's a good day for the entire province. I can't tell you how pleased I am that on this, the last day of the province's financial year, we are able to announce the scrapping of the old, broken community reinvestment fund and that it's going to be replaced today with the new Ontario municipal partnership fund. The fund has four components. I want to answer my friend from Nipissing and tell her that this new fund has a special component to deal with the unique requirements of municipalities in northern Ontario and in rural Ontario. It's a fund that is more equitable right across Ontario, and especially in the north.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Monsieur le ministre, le gouvernement McGuinty a fait une annonce très importante aujourd'hui pour les municipalités de l'Ontario pour remédier au délestage ainsi que réparer les pots cassés causés par les conservateurs.

Dans ma région, les municipalités d'Alfred-Plantagenet, Champlain, Glengarry-Nord, Hawesbury et Hawesbury-Est ont de quoi célébrer aujourd'hui : ils toucheront l'augmentation d'au-delà de 1,1\$ million de nouvel argent. Quelle excellente nouvelle.

Today's announcement is great news for eastern Ontario municipalities. During the ROMA-Good Roads conference, the eastern Ontario wardens' caucus, which represents 13 counties, requested that the McGuinty government reconcile the 2003-04 cost-sharing program. Minister, can you tell us if the Ontario municipal partnership fund meets the wardens' request?

L'hon. M. Sorbara: Il est très vrai, je dis à mon ami de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, que les maires dans l'est de l'Ontario ont fait certaines demandes très importantes. Je suis très heureux d'annoncer aujourd'hui que nous ferons un rapprochement complet des exercices pour 2004-2005.

I am very pleased that in the new Ontario municipal partnership fund we are doing a reconciliation of all the accounts of 2003-04. It's something that was asked for, particularly by wardens in eastern Ontario whose financial circumstances are very, very constrained. I'm pleased that this new fund will be of particular benefit to those wardens and those municipalities.

INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES

M. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Ma question s'adresse à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Je voudrais vous poser une question sur une école dans la région d'Ottawa; les étudiants ont besoin d'une nouvelle école. Votre ministre de l'Éducation, l'honorable Gerard Kennedy, a visité l'école secondaire Desjardins il y a beaucoup de mois. Je voudrais vous demander aujourd'hui, le dernier jour de l'année fiscale,

est-ce que vous avez une meilleure école? Est-ce que vous avez, comme ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, une solution aujourd'hui? L'école où ces étudiants doivent aller chaque jour n'est pas acceptable. Est-ce que c'est acceptable dans votre Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Oui—l'école Deslauriers. Je suis très au courant de l'école Deslauriers. C'est un problème. Ils ont besoin de plus grands espaces parce que l'école Deslauriers est victime de son succès. On est passé de 200 à 400 ou 600 étudiants. Alors, on a besoin de plus grands espaces.

Je dois dire que le ministre de l'Éducation a travaillé très près—je dois le féliciter—avec la communauté et avec les parents de cette école pour les assurer d'avoir les espaces dont ils ont besoin.

En supplémentaire, je vais référer la question au ministre de l'Éducation, qui va pouvoir vous donner les détails.

Mr. Baird: Madame, les citoyens de la grande ville d'Ottawa ne prennent pas votre travail d'une façon sérieuse. C'est bien que vous en soyez très au courant, c'est bien sûr très bien que vous ayez travaillé très fort, mais est-ce que vous avez une solution? Le ministre a fait une promesse à ces jeunes élèves d'Ottawa d'avoir une nouvelle et plus grande école acceptable. Les personnes de cette ville regardent votre promesse d'avoir un statut bilingue pour la grande ville d'Ottawa—une promesse brisée. Votre promesse d'avoir plus d'argent pour TFO—une promesse brisée. Il y a beaucoup de promesses pour les francophones de cette province mais pas d'actions. Dans votre poste comme ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, est-ce que vous pouvez dire que vous souhaitez avoir une solution bientôt à ce problème très sérieux dans la région d'Ottawa?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Je vais référer la question au ministre de l'Éducation, qui va répondre.

L'hon. Gerard Kennedy (ministre de l'Éducation): Il est incroyable d'avoir cette question d'un gouvernement qui ne reconnaît pas les besoins des personnes francophones de l'Ontario. Pour la première fois, il y a une reconnaissance dans la subvention de l'éducation. Pour la première fois, il y a 30 \$ millions pour garantir le même traitement égal, le même avenir heureux pour les élèves francophones de cette province. Pour les élèves, pour les parents et pour la communauté de Deslauriers, il y a une solution. Il y a maintenant une discussion entre les autres conseils scolaires et, absolument, on verra aujourd'hui ou cette semaine qu'il y aura une solution définitive, et aussi une solution générale, un avenir si clair pour les francophones et les anglophones de l'Ontario, uniquement sous le leadership—

The Speaker: Thank you. That brings us to the end of question period.

PETITIONS

1500

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada’s first Nobel Prize recipient; and

“Whereas this great Canadian’s original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth”—Alliston—“is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s private member’s bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come.”

I agree with this petition. I’ve signed it, and I want to thank the good people at the Nottawasaga Inn just east of Alliston for circulating this petition.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by hundreds of residents of Sudbury and area that reads as follows:

“Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists expired March 31, 2000; and

“Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP services remains unchanged since 1989; and

“Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

“Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye exams; and

“Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario.”

I agree with the petitioners and I’ve affixed my signature to this.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions regarding the GO Transit replacement and the bridge on St. Clair Avenue West. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning a tunnel in an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

“Whereas the TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue and Old Weston Road bridge; and

“Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will have only one lane of traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it’s about 50 metres long). It’s dark and slopes on both the east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man’s land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under” the “St. Clair Avenue West” bridge “—thus eliminating this eyesore ... with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I’m delighted to sign it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): I have a petition about support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments” of hospitals;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

"Whereas there are no established Ontario-wide standards to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Ontario Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all Ontario schools, be it therefore resolved....

"That the government of Ontario support the swift passage of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, that requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

This petition is signed by a number of homeowners on Harvey Crescent in Mississauga. I'm pleased to affix my signature in agreement with them.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that pro-

tections the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

This is signed by a number of the delegates to the ROMA-Good Roads convention about a month and a half ago, and I've affixed my signature as well to express my support.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment."

Since I agree, I am delighted to put my signature to it.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I am pleased to present this petition, which was forwarded to me by a former colleague, the Reverend Canon Derwyn Shea, who as you know is chairman and chief executive officer of St. Hilda's Towers. The petition was signed by residents of St. Hilda's, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the current Liberal government of Ontario has indicated its intention to delist physiotherapy services for most seniors; and

"Whereas most residents living in our assisted residential care facility rely upon physiotherapy services for quality of life; and

"Whereas most residents of our assisted residential care facility survive on very modest monthly income and many require subsidized accommodation and cannot afford to privately pay for physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the delisting of physiotherapy services for seniors will result in increased strain on Ontario's health care system and budget and will contribute to deteriorating health conditions and quality of life for seniors and will be viewed as breaking a promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

"Whereas the care and support of the most vulnerable in our society is surely a social contract of the highest

priority for any government with vision and integrity; and

"Whereas it appears to be the intention of the current government of Ontario to turn its back on the needs of our aging citizens in the delisting of physiotherapy services;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario not delist physiotherapy services for the Ontario health insurance plan and that funding for such services not be reduced."

I want to thank the residents of St. Hilda's for bringing this petition forward, and I'm pleased to add my signature to it.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children's aid society's recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

"Whereas the introduction of a 'volunteer' into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the" school "principal; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council."

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing Huronia Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of Huronia Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many

more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Huronia Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

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CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to read into the record this petition, which relates to chiropractic services in Ontario and has not been addressed by this government. The petition reads as follows:

"Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition, and I trust that the Minister of Finance and the Premier are listening.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise pursuant to standing order 55 to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, April 4, in the afternoon, Bill 155; in the evening, Bill 92.

On Tuesday, April 5, in the afternoon, Bill 144; in the evening, Bill 128.

On Wednesday, April 6, in the afternoon, Bill 155; in the evening, Bill 92.

On Thursday, April 7, in the afternoon, Bill 128.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FORFEITED PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXÉCUTION DE LA LOI ET L'ADMINISTRATION DES BIENS CONFISQUÉS

Mr Kwinter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to enforcement powers, penalties and the management of property forfeited, or that may be forfeited, to the Crown in right of Ontario as a result of organized crime, marijuana growing and other unlawful activities / *Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs d'exécution, les pénalités et l'administration des biens confisqués ou pouvant être confisqués au profit de la Couronne du chef de l'Ontario par suite d'activités de crime organisé et de culture de marijuana ainsi que d'autres activités illégales.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my parliamentary assistant, Ms. Sandals.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today to support second reading of important legislation that will help combat marijuana grow operations. Marijuana remains the most widely used illicit drug in Canada, and as a result of the profitability and relatively low penalties involved, marijuana growing has become a thriving provincial industry.

For some time there have been calls for government action to address the proliferation of indoor marijuana grow operations. The McGuinty government understands that grow-ops are a big problem and pose a safety risk to communities and to those whose job it is to keep our communities safe. We are serious about tackling grow-ops and we will continue to work with the police and others to achieve this goal.

Grow-ops are complex operations, and the solutions for removing them from our communities are also complex. So let me make it clear: The legislation we are considering today is not the be-all and end-all of the government's response to this problem. It is just the beginning, a good first step, toward putting these operators out of business and making our communities safer. We are actively looking at our options for our next steps in our fight against grow-ops. We are focusing on giving police, municipalities and others the tools they need to find and shut down grow-ops.

The policing community supports this legislation. In fact, we have a number of policing representatives here

with us today whom I'd like to recognize. Please welcome Rick Houston of the Police Association of Ontario; Walter Tomasik and Bob Welsh of the Ontario Police Association; representing the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Ken Cenzura; and, from the Toronto Police Service, Dan Hayes.

Municipalities are supportive of government action on grow-ops. Roger Anderson, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents more than 400 communities province-wide, wrote to me in a letter last October. In it he said:

"AMO does support the need to combat this very serious problem that is undermining the safety of Ontario communities.... We need to see more prosecutions and convictions if we are to see a clear message sent that grow-ops are not tolerated in Ontario's communities.

"Again, we appreciate the government's desire to try to give us new authority and tools. I look forward to working with you on implementing these very important proposals."

We are doing more than other provinces to combat grow-ops in Ontario. We are doing more than the previous government to tackle the proliferation of grow-ops in Ontario. The previous government was in power for eight years but failed to introduce government legislation such as the bill that we will be considering today.

This government is tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. This legislation is just the first step in a comprehensive provincial strategy to address the explosive growth of indoor marijuana grow operations that threaten the safety of residential neighbourhoods.

By working with our partners—the police, local municipalities, electrical utilities, fire prevention officials and the private sector—we are taking action against marijuana grow operations in a sustained and coordinated way.

This is first and foremost about safeguarding neighbourhoods against serious fire and health risks that come with grow-ops. These operations often run out of homes and buildings in residential areas and place residents and neighbourhoods alike, including children and their families, at serious risk of death or illness from fire hazards, toxins and chemical waste.

This is about protecting the economy. Grow operations have cost the province hundreds of millions of dollars over the last three years.

This is about protecting the vulnerable. These operations prey on the most vulnerable members of society. Recent immigrants are often conscripted to babysit marijuana crops to pay off immigration and other debts.

This legislation, if passed, is just the first step in the provincial strategy, a strategy that will help create stronger and safer communities for all Ontario residents. Marijuana grow-ops are a blight on our neighbourhoods. Marijuana grow-ops are a problem we all share, and they are a problem we must all work together to solve.

This legislation, if passed, would:

(1) Allow an electricity distributor to disconnect hydro without notice for emergency, safety or system reliability reasons;

(2) Require building inspectors of all homes that police confirm contained a grow-op. If municipal officials deem the property unsafe, they are required to issue orders for repair. This would protect people from purchasing a property that would require thousands of dollars of repairs;

(3) Double the maximum penalties under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, for any contravention such as tampering with wiring that would cause excessive heating that would lead to a fire, something commonly done in grow-ops; and

(4) Set up a special-purpose account so that the proceeds of grow-ops and other criminal activities such as real estate, vehicles and other equipment can be spent on enforcement and crime prevention.

This legislation is about public safety, consumer protection and ensuring that the proceeds of crime go toward law enforcement, crime prevention and victim compensation.

It provides for setting up a special-purpose account to receive the proceeds from crime, such as grow-ops, and to direct them to one of three areas: first, to providing police with the tools they need to fight grow-ops in our neighbourhoods; secondly, to crime prevention programs; and thirdly, to helping those victimized by grow-ops. We are targeting the large operators who are cultivating thousands of plants, often exporting the final product to the US in exchange for guns and hard drugs.

1520

Last year, I hosted, with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Green Tide Summit. That summit was just the first step in what will be a long road, but a road that must be travelled. One of those early steps was the establishment of a permanent group of experts, called the Green Tide action group, dedicated to seeking solutions to the problem of grow-ops. The group is made up of those groups directly affected by these large indoor grow operations: all three levels of government, the banking and real estate sectors, electricity producers, and the policing and firefighter communities. At stake is the continued health and safety of our neighbourhoods.

This action group is currently developing new protocols for interaction between the police and municipal building departments. The action group is developing an investigative protocol that will give police and municipal officials the clout they need. We're also looking at a house-entry protocol and a notification protocol that will ensure that those who should be notified about residential grow operators are informed in a timely manner.

However, there is much that our stakeholders can do now, without waiting for or relying on a new law enforcement model. We must protect the unsuspecting public from purchasing a home previously used as a grow-op. We must also give police and municipal officials the tools they need to punish those who do not provide due diligence when selling a property.

Firefighters too have expressed concern about the challenges they face in responding to incidents at houses being used as grow operations. In a letter, Fire Chief Fields from Windsor indicated his support of this legislation and wrote of the dangers associated with grow-ops. But Chief Fields also outlined these challenges: "There are health risks associated from mould, chemicals used in these operations and the high concentration of [carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide] not only to residents but also to firefighters and public safety providers who are subject to increased exposure during an emergency response."

Chief Fields also recognized the need to work together to deal with this safety issue: "Windsor Fire and Rescue Services supports the efforts proposed by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and we stand beside our police services and their chiefs in the effort put forward to combat the harmful effects of these" residential problems.

The likelihood of a fire in a grow-op is far greater than in a normal private home. Just two weeks ago in Wainfleet, firefighters responding to a greenhouse blaze found a massive marijuana grow operation. They seized thousands of plants worth millions of dollars.

It's time that the federal government got serious and changed the Criminal Code to make these unscrupulous grow operators pay for their crimes. We have lobbied our colleagues in Ottawa to crack down on those who prey on society. Too often, the penalty for operating a grow operation is so minimal that operators chalk up the small fines they usually receive as the price of doing business.

The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards agrees with us. In a letter to the Premier last December, the OAPSB indicated its support for tougher penalties for grow operators.

This is not a problem that the provincial government alone can solve. It's not a problem that the banks, the real estate industry, the insurers or municipalities alone can solve. This is not a problem that the police alone can solve. But by working in concert, we can solve it together.

This is not a victimless crime, as many people would have us believe. Everyone in the province suffers as a result of these criminals. This government, working with its partners, intends to do all it can to stamp out illegal grow-ops. Today's legislation is a positive first step, but it's just that: a first step. There is much more that needs to be done and much more we can do. But we can't do it alone. We are committed to working with all our partners to put these operators out of business.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I am pleased to rise and add my support for this important piece of legislation. As my colleague Minister Kwinter said, this is the first step in a comprehensive strategy to tackle the serious problems caused by the increasing number of indoor marijuana grow-ops that are appearing in our towns and in our neighbourhoods. Nowhere is completely safe from the dangers posed by grow-ops. They're particularly dangerous when they appear in

residential communities. They hide themselves in upscale suburban homes and in downtown apartment buildings, in quiet leafy suburbs and on busy city streets. They are in our neighbourhoods and they are next to our schools. They put us all at risk.

I personally don't have to look far to see how pervasive grow-ops have become. In my hometown of Guelph alone, police uncovered and dismantled nine grow-ops in 2003, and Guelph is not atypical. According to the Canadian Police Association, the number of marijuana grow-ops uncovered in Ontario rose from 422 in 2000 to 2,500 in 2003. These illegal operations steal resources from our economy, threaten the safety of our communities and prey on the most vulnerable among us as they look for their workers among the poor and among recent immigrants.

Our partners from the municipalities, from Ontario's police and fire services and from the private sector asked us to give them the tools they need to remove this blight from our neighbourhoods. This legislation is the first step in doing just that. This legislation, if passed, will amend a number of acts. Each amendment addresses a specific concern in the fight against grow-ops, and each amendment provides our partners in this fight with a tool they've told us they need to better combat these insidious ventures.

How did they tell us? Through consultations and through the province's Green Tide Summit, the first-ever meeting of key groups from police, utilities, the real estate and insurance industries, all concerned about grow-ops and all willing to sit down with each other and talk about real solutions. This bill works toward those real solutions.

Amendments to the Building Code Act will require a building inspection after the police notify a municipality that a property has been used as a grow-op. An official designated by the municipality will then inspect the property and, if it is determined to be unsafe, will be able to order the remedial work needed to make the building safe again. This is a crucial tool. Homes used as grow-ops are often heavily altered and rarely conform to planning and building code standards. Bypassed hydro panels, core structural modifications and mould caused by the high humidity of the operations all pose a danger to those who live close by or in the affected building.

At this point, I'd like to congratulate the city of Vaughan, which was the first city in Ontario to establish a formal process for inspecting grow-ops after the police have secured the property and completed their investigation. I understand the city is looking at going even further, by insisting sellers post signs on a property warning potential buyers that the dwelling was once used as a marijuana grow operation. I commend Vaughan for the example it has set and point out that the provisions of this legislation would help municipalities follow Vaughan's lead. If passed, it would help towns and cities across the province protect those who might buy grow-op properties in the future as well as those who live and work nearby them today.

1530

Next, the legislation tackles the problems associated with the improper, illegal and excessive use of electricity by grow-ops. Amendments to the Electricity Act will give power distribution companies the authority they need to disconnect power without notice when they believe there is a threat to safety or to the integrity of the distribution system itself.

Marijuana grow operations steal electricity. According to the Green Tide report, theft of hydro from 2000 to 2003 is estimated at anywhere between \$2.7 million and \$35.8 million per month, and it is on the rise. To steal all that electricity, the criminals who run these operations make dangerous modifications to wiring, bypassing the meter and often even the fuse panel. These modifications put everyone in the building in danger and those nearby as well.

According to the Electricity Distributors Association, the average grow-op steals \$1,500 worth of electricity per month. That represents 10 times the average domestic consumption. Power companies need this amendment to react quickly to threats as soon as they notice something is amiss. They need this amendment to protect the safety of our communities and to protect the power on which we all rely.

One of the most serious threats posed by indoor grow operations housed in residential properties is fire. This legislation would amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, giving more teeth to those who enforce the Ontario fire code. Contraventions of the code, such as bypassing hydro panels or installing wiring that would cause excessive heat, will now be punished with fines of up to \$50,000 or one year in jail. Again, this is an example of how this legislation targets a specific concern and gives our partners the tools to address that concern.

Another example is the amendment this legislation would make to the Municipal Act. The amendment would allow municipalities to enter into co-operative arrangements with any person or organization in order to enforce its bylaws. That means towns and cities would be able to organize partnerships with other public sector and private sector organizations to share information and support the enforcement of local bylaws, statutes and regulations in the fight to shut down this scourge.

The Green Tide report concluded that co-operation among all levels of government, police and fire services and stakeholders in the private sector is the key to fighting grow-ops. The provisions I've talked about so far would make that co-operation easier while increasing the clout of our partners in this fight.

The remaining amendments address the cause of these operations, and there is only one: Marijuana grow operations exist to make money. While the profits to be made exceed the risks to be taken, there will always be those to whom a grow-op is attractive. The way to dissuade these operations is to increase their cost of doing business.

The remaining provisions would do just that. Amendments to a number of acts would set up a mechanism that

would allow the government to manage and dispose of the assets seized in grow-op busts, assets such as real estate, cars and other equipment. At present, the federal government manages the disposition of assets forfeited due to criminal activity. This legislation would set up a provincial unit to manage and dispose of assets seized under a civil order. The money raised from the sale of such assets could then be used for crime prevention, law enforcement and the prosecution of criminal justice.

As Minister Kwinter said, this legislation is only the first step in the development of a comprehensive provincial strategy to tackle marijuana grow operations, but it is a bold first step. This legislation demonstrates the government's commitment to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. It protects the public and punishes the offenders. It lets our partners across the public and private sector know that the government is serious about this issue and about working co-operatively with them to find innovative and effective ways to fight this blight in our communities. And it puts the criminals who run these operations on notice that they can expect no quarter as we work to root them out and shut them down.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to take this opportunity to commend the minister for bringing this legislation forward. As you will know, there are not many things I agree with that this government is doing or has done since its election. But this is one occasion when I'm pleased to rise on behalf of, certainly, my constituents as a member of this Legislature to say that it is encouraging to see the initiative that's being brought forward in this legislation.

I want to take this opportunity to commend our police services in York region, under the leadership of Chief La Barge, for the good work they've done in this area in terms of responding. But let me also take this opportunity to appeal to the minister and to this government: Having put in place a framework of legislation to deal with this issue, let's also ensure that we provide the necessary financial resources to the police services, not only to respond but in fact to be proactive.

My discussions with those in the police services—specifically very recently with a member of the police services board, Mr. Bob Callow. When I was questioning the status within York region on this issue, he reminded me that it's one thing to have the will to do something about this issue and yet another thing to have the financial resources within the police services to respond appropriately. So I look to the minister to use his influence with the Premier, and of course the Chair of Management Board, to ensure that in this upcoming budget there be the appropriate budgetary allowances for police services right across this province, to ensure that the manpower is on the front lines and that the resources are there to support this legislation.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to have a chance to participate more fully in this debate in around an hour, an hour and 10 minutes' time. But at the onset I want to indicate that the minister authoring this

bill is a minister for whom I have high regard, a minister I have known for a long time and a person I like.

Look, we can create all the laws in the world, we can fill the shelves with statute books, but if you don't have cops out on the street with the training and resources to investigate breaches of those laws, and then to participate in the effective prosecution of the wrongdoers, all the statutes in the world mean zip, nothing, nada. They're not worth the paper they're written on. So I appreciate the intent of the legislation. I think there are a couple of layers of intent here, but the manifest intent is to give law enforcement officers and others—well, basically, to give law enforcement in general the tools to bust grow operations. It sure beats Jim Karygiannis's going door to door, asking folks if they happen to be growing pot in their particular home. I don't know how many times he's been offered one of those funny cigarettes in the course of his door-to-door knocking, but Lord knows it may well have happened, and I understand why he wouldn't want to report back on that.

Let's understand: statute after statute after statute, and Lord knows, over the last eight, nine years now, nine and a half, we saw a whole lot of statutes being enacted, some of them not even proclaimed, but those being proclaimed never being enforced because at the end of the day they were nothing but spin.

I'm looking forward to the debate and to hearing the opposition members and their contribution, and to the opportunity to make my own.

1540

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): In my short two minutes, I just want to reiterate my support for this legislation, basically amending several acts that are on the books right now and making it easier for our police services and municipal authorities to go after these grow-ops. In my experience as a former city councillor, one of the most frustrating things was my inability to get building inspectors to go into homes or buildings where there were various violations against municipal bylaws. One of the amendments here proposes that building inspectors would be able to go into these locations if they had grounds to believe there were some problems or possible grow-ops.

This, again, is a first step. We campaigned, when I went door to door, on safer communities. We wanted to have and see safer communities across Ontario. This legislation is a first step in going in that direction; it's by no means the final solution or the final answer to this growing problem.

I'm just looking at the stats in front of me. In 2003, there were 140 marijuana operations or grow-ops in the Toronto area, and by 2004, 248 indoor operations had been estimated to be existing in Toronto. So the proliferation is substantial.

We need to take action and we need to do it in a comprehensive fashion. I think this bill, with its amendments and its co-operative approach, working with the municipal and police authorities, is the proper way to go about dealing with this growing problem.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I wish to commend my colleague and long-time friend, the minister, for this legislation. I'd like to add a couple of issues that I hope he would consider, one that is within his purview and one that isn't.

Recently, there was an editorial in our community newspaper raising questions that, on the one hand, we've got a province which is moving more forcefully in terms of police activity and enforcement with respect to reducing the incidence of grow-ops in the province, while at the same time the federal government is talking about decriminalization of marijuana—clearly conflicting and, to a degree, somewhat contradictory public policy directions. I know the minister probably doesn't feel comfortable responding to it, but I think it needs to be put on the record that if the federal government is going in this direction, what does that say about our current efforts and our future efforts?

I know this has been triggered, in part, by the tragic events that occurred in Alberta a month ago that resulted in the deaths of RCMP officers. So I would hope the minister has applied some thinking to the training that's required in these instances, the support, the backup, the resources that are required.

I'd also like the minister to consider a piece of legislation which I entered in this House many years ago with respect to the seizure of assets for criminal conduct. I would ask the minister to look more closely at that, and its applications in these instances, and to somehow insulate landlords who will be subjected to substantive fines when they unwittingly rent to individuals who are conducting themselves in criminal activity. I hope the minister would consider some of those issues a little more carefully, and that the actual criminals end up paying in this instance.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs. Sandals: I'd like to thank the members from Oak Ridges, Scarborough Southwest and Burlington for their support, and the member from Niagara Centre, who appreciates the intent. I think I hear the beginning of support there. The jury is out on that, but appreciating the attempt is a good first step.

I'd like to talk a little bit more about the situation with building inspectors. Make no mistake that when we're talking about these grow-ops, we're not talking about somebody who's got a couple of plants in the garden shed; we're talking about people who have essentially destroyed a house in order to turn it into a high-humidity greenhouse to make money for crime, often organized crime—big profits that they can turn out of this.

It's interesting, for those of us who have to read laws, to look at the difference between a law that says "shall" and a law that says "may." In the past, a building inspector "may"—maybe, might, if they get around to it—go and inspect a house. This legislation says that when the police have finished their investigation of a grow-op and made sure it's safe for other people to enter the building, once the police notify the municipality, the

building inspector, the municipal official, "shall"—must, has to, has no choice—go and inspect this grow-op and make sure the grow-op is safe. If it isn't safe for human habitation—if it still has unsafe wiring, if it still has structural defects, if it still has mould that would make it unsafe to breathe the air—then it must be fixed.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to do our leadoff today on Bill 128, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to enforcement powers, penalties and the management of property forfeited, or that may be forfeited, to the Crown in right of Ontario as a result of organized crime, marijuana growing and other unlawful activities.

First of all, I want to say, for this tough-on-law-and-order government, it's really nice after 18 months to finally have an opportunity to debate a law-and-order bill in this House. I would have thought, for a government that is tough on law and order, they might have done something last year. It's disappointing that 18 months later we're finally getting around to a bill that was introduced last year.

A quick comment on the Green Tide Summit: It's unfortunate that the minister referred to the previous government as doing nothing on this particular legislation, because our government was part of the organizing plan to put together the Green Tide Summit. You happened to win the election in 2003 and inherited the Green Tide report and then went on, of course, with the summit.

The minister has called this a good first step; it's not the be-all and end-all. We agree with that, because there are no dollars announced with this particular piece of legislation. It's not going to cost the government any money. That's what it's all about today: You're not spending any money on this bill. It's a little bit floppy, but in the end it does give the municipalities—the utilities and the building departments—some resources to work with to actually make some movement in enforcing the intent of the legislation.

I want to take a minute to also welcome all the police stakeholders who are here today. I won't name everybody—the minister already did—but it's great to see that they're here to support the legislation and to support law and order and community safety in our province. I notice that some of my colleagues or residents of my area from the Ontario Provincial Police Association are here, and I want to welcome them. A little earlier today, I made a statement on tomorrow being the 45th anniversary of the Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary program. If I could, I'll just take a minute and talk about the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the OPP auxiliary and how important they are to the citizens of this province. I understand—and I don't know if everybody in the room or everybody at home is aware of this—there are about 7,500 civilian and uniformed officers in the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the auxiliary. They, of course, look after law and order, keep our communities safe from crime and keep the highways safe as well, as we work toward a safer society. It is the auxiliary's 45th

anniversary tomorrow. They have about 900 auxiliary officers in the province, and these auxiliary officers actually contribute about 220,000 volunteer hours helping out the Ontario Provincial Police officers in their line of duty on a day-to-day basis, on a week-to-week basis, through detachments throughout the province.

1550

Because there are some OPPA members here, I wanted to thank them and to congratulate them for being able to come to the kind of harmony you work with, with the auxiliary officers. It's not always easy when you're an association or a union and you have volunteer workers coming in to help with jobs that could potentially be done by paid officers. In this case, it's one of the largest auxiliary programs we have in North America. There's tremendous communication and organization and cohesion between these two organizations, and I think it's appropriate that that was brought out today. I certainly didn't have that much time to say anything in the statement I made earlier this afternoon on the OPPA.

I know there are members here from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Another connection I have to the OACP, of course, is that the president this year is the chief of police of the Midland Police Service, Paul Hamelin. I know Paul is not here today, but I want to congratulate the folks from the OACP who are here as well. Paul, I think, has done a great job in that area and has worked well representing the OACP here at Queen's Park with the different ministries.

There are a couple of things that I really want to zero in on here if I could, and a lot of it has to do with the intent of the bill. I'll read what the minister actually put in his press release back in the early fall.

"The proposed legislation, if passed, would," and there are three bullet points on this:

"—allow local hydro distribution companies to disconnect hydro without notice in accordance with a court order or for emergency, safety or system reliability reasons—such as a grow-op;

"—require building inspections of all homes that police confirm contained a grow-op. If buildings are deemed unsafe, inspectors are required to issue orders for repair; and, thirdly,

"—amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, by doubling the maximum penalties under the act for any contraventions of the Ontario Fire Code, such as tampering with wiring that would cause excessive heating that would lead to a fire, something commonly done in grow-ops."

That's probably one of the better parts of the bill, in my opinion, because if there's an area that we need to save money on, we don't need our fire departments running around putting out additional fires in homes of any kind. Certainly, there's a huge cost to the insurance industry, but of course there's a tremendous cost in the value of life and the safety of our fire services as well, and I think it's important that we mention that as part of the comments today. The fact that the bill calls for

doubling those penalties may in fact help us out somewhat.

The minister said in his comments—and I don't have one of these ministry speeches that the minister and his parliamentary assistant had. It might be handy if we did have kind of an opposition speech to give sometimes. My speech is all over my desk here, and there are a number of comments I wanted to bring forward on that.

But what I want to talk about for a moment is something that former minister Frank Klees had actually mentioned in his comments, and that's the need for more resources. In the last election, both the Progressive Conservative Party and the Liberal Party promised 1,000 new police officers for the communities in Ontario. I know that the minister and the Premier tried to commit to that promise. It was last October 24, I believe, when they made an announcement somewhere over in town here. It said that they're going to implement \$30 million to go toward these 1,000 new police officers.

At the time, I was fairly excited about that because I thought, at least they're starting to fulfill this commitment. The problem is that we can create all these bills we want, as far as making the building department do something is concerned, or the public utility or the fire department, but in the end if you take a look at the grow-ops that we have in Ontario, at some of the ones that have been discovered like the one in Barrie at the former Molson's plant, we need more resources for our police services. That doesn't need to come in the hands of the building inspector, if you're going to deputize a building inspector or a hydro inspector. The police services in Ontario need additional help.

You have said already that this is a growing business, the marijuana grow operations, and we know that, as we speak, it's growing even faster because the police can't possibly keep up to the pressure they're under in trying to fight this battle.

What does it really cost to put 1,000 police officers on the street? I've had this argument with a few people around, but I wanted to add a few comments. In a press release to mark the launch of Crime Prevention Week, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals found the nerve to drag in their election promise to put 1,000 new officers on the streets for community policing. Cautiously, Minister Kwinter's quote in the press release omits what has become to the McGuinty Liberals the dreaded P word, "promise." Kwinter opted instead to use the word "commitment" in his quote, which essentially means the same thing, but apparently to the Liberals isn't as hard-hitting.

Kwinter's quote is as follows: "And our focus on crime prevention is why the Premier recently announced a commitment to adding 1,000 police officers across the province."

For those not familiar with the Liberals' election promises, Kwinter makes this sound like McGuinty just came up with a so-called commitment. More importantly, nowhere in the release does Kwinter mention that his government will only contribute a measly \$30 million

over the rest of its mandate to hiring 1,000 officers. If McGuinty were to phase in the 1,000 officers over the remaining three years of his mandate at 333 officers per year, costing roughly \$100,000 each, which includes the benefits etc.—and in some places you might even put in the cost of the vehicles the officers have to drive—this is how it would calculate in the final price tag.

Year one—we've already missed out on any new police officers for the year 2004-05, because I think the year ends tomorrow and I understand there hasn't been a cop hired anywhere under the announcement. But if we had done that at the time of the announcement back on October 24 and phased in 333 officers up until the end of March of this year, which of course is today—maybe Dalton was out today making an announcement of 333 new police officers, I don't know, but I don't think that happened today—I can tell you that this would have cost roughly \$33 million. With three years left in the mandate, if you would have placed that \$33 million per year into the next two years, that would have been \$99 million.

The same thing happens the next year, and that's supposing the police officers don't receive a raise. You hire another 333 officers at \$100,000 each, and there's two years left in that mandate. That's another \$66 million.

In year three, the final year, you would only have the one year left and that's the year 2006-07, you'd have \$33 million.

That would cost you roughly \$200 million to the taxpayers of Ontario, whether it's the municipal police services paying part of the money, the councils, or it's the Ontario government.

The bottom line is that someone has to pay to have those police officers on the street. I think my numbers are fairly accurate when it comes to the amount of money. So far we have \$30 million committed over three years, which was my understanding from the Premier's announcement, and it's going to cost \$200 million. You're going to get away with a little less than that because now you can divide that into—well, I don't have the right calculations for that, but it would cost less now because you've missed this first year of the announcement.

That's the part I find quite disappointing, that we're making so called be-all and end-all announcements. It's not the be-all and end-all, it's only a first step, but I thought that if you're going to make a step toward helping combat marijuana grow-ops, and I'm not an expert in this area, but I thought you needed more resources. I thought the police needed more help. I've talked to a number of police stakeholders at the Police Association of Ontario, at the OACP, and to a number of police officers that I know in the OPP, and everyone that I talk to tells me that it's people out there in cars and uniforms, detectives finding out how you combat this, finding out how you can actually stop them from even happening in the first place. So we don't have to worry about a real estate agent peeking his nose in the door of a garage or something and saying, "Oh, oh, I think we've got a grow-op here. I better call the building inspector,"

and the building inspector calls the police. It's sort of a cycle that I don't think is really the intent of the legislation.

1600

I think what we need to do is to have police officers out doing their jobs. That would mean, of course, hiring more police officers, and I thought that's what the government promised to do. The Premier had done a press release on the hiring of 1,000 new police officers. Your government promised 1,000 new police officers, and your Premier recently promised that some of these new officers would target, and I quote from the Premier's press release, "organized crime, particularly marijuana grow-ops."

So I'm looking for this next step. I think that's going to be very important, what the next step is in this fight on the marijuana grow operations. I'm thinking that what the government actually does is going to be very important. If it's going to be going to the fire department or to the Rotary Club or something like that and helping them fight grow-ops, I don't think that's going to be the answer. I think we have to go back to the original intent of the role of government, and that's to hire the police services they need. I think police services today are under tremendous pressure no matter where they are, from a wide variety of things, including things like child pornography and the Internet luring etc., that we hear different kinds of announcements on. They simply do not have the presence and the numbers of officers to fight the grow-ops in their present form.

I think the other thing that's really important to this legislation and to fighting grow-ops is stiffer penalties from Ottawa. I did hear the minister comment that he was lobbying Ottawa for more help on this. It's my understanding the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police would like to have a two-year minimum sentence for those found guilty of producing grow-op operations, not an expensive \$5,000 fine or something like that, where it's the price of doing business. They need to be locked up and put in jail. I understand it's all part of the Criminal Code of Canada.

In a press release that the minister put out on December 18, 2003, shortly after he became minister, he actually said that he would be working with Ottawa about increasing penalties for these types of crimes. I hope someone from the government can give us a summary on this at some point during part of this debate. I'm hoping that they can come up and tell us what they've actually done to date, since December 18, 2003. Have there been a number of meetings? Has there been like a Green Tide Summit with the federal guys, so they can talk about what kind of fines the Criminal Code may be changed to? Or has nothing been done? There's been a couple of fancy little letters sent off. The feds, we know, haven't been doing a lot, and you people right now are not very friendly with the federal government. It used to be the Conservatives—whenever we mentioned the federal transfers or about the Canada health and social transfers

or the shortage of funding for health care, it was called federal-bashing from us.

I listened yesterday to Ernie Parsons. I'm sorry I used his name. I know you're supposed to use his riding, but I can't remember what riding he's from.

The Acting Speaker: Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Dunlop: Prince Edward—Hastings. I'm sorry about that.

He did a two-minute hit on fed-bashing. I don't know if anybody heard that yesterday. He was bashing all of the federal members in Ontario who are not sticking up for the provincial government. That's what he said. I found it alarming, because if we had done that, or if we did that today and bashed the Right Honourable Paul Martin, you'd probably be upset. But I think the tides have changed. Now we find that this government is not getting along as well with the feds as you might expect.

I remember Mr. McGuinty tried to set up a special meeting not too long ago with the Prime Minister, and I understand they wouldn't meet with him. Danny Williams from Newfoundland got all the money. He was the first guy. He was the smartest guy. He got there first, and now the other folks are all falling in behind, trying to come up with special arrangements on the transfer payments. I understand that when Dalton went to talk to them, the door was slammed in his face.

So unless this minister's got a lot more power than I think he has, I'm not so sure we're going to see these changes to the Criminal Code, but I really do hope. I think if you hire more police officers and put them in this program and increase the penalties, that's two of the key recommendations that came from the Green Tide report. I think it's really important that we as politicians try to make sure that's implemented to help out the police officers and to help out this terrible—I call it a disease.

I want to let you know, I'm against the decriminalization of marijuana and the legalization of it. I don't know if that's the feeling of everybody in this House, but if we're trying to get rid of cigarettes and we're trying to stop people from smoking, I don't think we need to do anything with trying to legalize marijuana or even decriminalize it. I wanted to make sure I got that on the record as well, because I think it's important that that is stated.

I might not be able to make a whole hour. There's a lot to talk about here, but not that much.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): Peter won't have any problems.

Mr. Dunlop: I do want to leave some time today for Mr. Kormos. I know it's important that he finally gets on the record. He's not acknowledged very often and doesn't get a chance to speak too often.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): He's so shy.

Mr. Dunlop: He's very shy about these types of issues. I hope that I am allowed a little bit of time to turn over to him. It's important.

To make a long story short, it is important, I think. I've been talking about this for a long time in my role as

critic, and as I said, this is our first opportunity to debate a community safety bill in this House. We have done after first reading—we did the mandatory gunshot bill, and that has passed through the committee, without any of the amendments adding knife wounds, I might say. I don't know why the parliamentary assistant was adamant that knife wounds not be included in that piece of legislation. I was disappointed in that. I thought that would be a progressive step in that particular piece of legislation. However, we have had committee on that, and now we're working on finally having a House bill debated here in the Legislature from the Minister of Community Safety.

I wanted to add another thing on the resources available to the police services. I know not everybody agrees with this, but I was disappointed in the announcement last fall when the minister removed option 4 from the police services, because that was a source of revenue to hire more policemen in a lot of cases. We don't have that option available any more in Ontario, and I'm disappointed, because there was not a lot of consultation done with the chiefs of police on that. They of course have to go to their councils and police services boards with their budgets, and they have to find money somewhere for additional resources. What's happened is that we are now seeing, in a lot of cases, higher than normal taxes in a lot of the different municipalities, Barrie being one example. I know the chief of Barrie was very disappointed that option 4 was removed without a consultation process and a makeup for it.

1610

I want to touch on another public safety issue from the Minister of Community Safety: his announcement more recently, just a week ago, on March 22, on the additional money, the \$30 million, for fire services across our province.

My initial reaction is that any money that we can help our fire services with—they can always use money for training and equipment, that's a known fact, and a lot of police and fire services have mentioned that as well. However, when we didn't have any money for police services and there was no money for the 1,000 new police officers, I was amazed that in a year when the government had just found out that their deficit has ballooned to close to \$7 billion—and that \$7-billion deficit is with an additional \$7 billion in revenue that you've added in extra taxes and health premiums.

What's disappointing is that they would make an announcement like that \$30 million—something that wasn't budgeted was put in the budget. They made an announcement three days after they found out they had close to a \$7-billion deficit. I'm surprised they did that when in 2003-04, right after what you call the Magna budget, there was \$40 million put in that budget for fire services plus a helicopter for the Toronto Police Service. You removed the helicopter and certainly didn't do anything with the \$40 million that was budgeted for the 2003-04 budget, because you said you had a deficit. So you have a deficit in 2004-05, and you're starting out

2005-06 with a \$7-billion deficit, and now you suddenly have money for fire departments. It seems ironic. My best bet is that now you're likely to make an announcement for the helicopter, maybe two helicopters. That's what I find a little bit ironic about some of the actions the government is taking in the community safety area.

I'm not going to spend any more time on this bill. I'm wearing thin as far as something to talk about, other than that it is a bill we can support. But as the minister has said, it is not the be-all and end-all and it's a good first step. What we'll be looking for is what the next step is. I hope the next step is at least a third to a half of the police officers that you promised in your election platform. You're already known for being a government that breaks promises; we know that. It doesn't matter where you go, at an event on a weekend or anywhere you talk to people, if you're at a banquet or any type of function, what you hear about Dalton McGuinty is that he breaks promises. That's what we hear all the time.

Surely we're not going to go through—this government that's now tough on law and order; we heard the parliamentary assistant say that. She gave us a Wild West type of speech over there. For a government that is tough on law and order, we certainly expect to see in this coming budget at least a third to half of those 1,000 police officers that were promised in Dalton McGuinty's platform in the fall of 2003, when they were elected to government. We'll be watching that very, very carefully, especially when they make announcements for money in areas like firemen, where it wasn't budgeted, like that \$30 million, and we see money that wasn't budgeted for a casino—\$400 million. We know what that was all about. That was because you had to keep Duncan and Papatello happy. But the bottom line is that those were not budgeted items, as far as the budget we've seen that Mr. Sorbara presented to us last year. It's important that the next step be additional police officers, additional resources. Let's get a final report from the minister, and I'd like to see something come back to this House showing the negotiations that have gone on with the federal government and how to stiffen these penalties. It's got to be important. If nothing has been done in that particular area, then that's actually criminal, because certainly we know that tougher penalties, minimum two-year sentences, would be supported by most of the police stakeholders and I think would be a giant step in eliminating these marijuana grow operations.

I'm just trying to figure out how much time I've got left. I don't know what happened to the clock; something happened to the clock, I talked so long. In the end, after debate, our government will be supporting this legislation.

I've got a little note here to mention something about the building code possibly. It's important that the comments coming from the parliamentary assistant and the minister today basically talked about residential grow-ops. I'm not so sure when I read the bill and listen to the comments—

Mr. Kormos: What about Molson's in Barrie?

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, and that's the question we have. How do municipalities—and I'm thinking of the city of Barrie and the township of Oro Medonte, which had another large grow-op just north of Barrie, in the township, right on the highway, almost identical to the operation we saw at Molson's, only a smaller building but it was a commercial building. Mr. Speaker, I'm not telling you anything because you know the operation in Barrie. You've seen all the publicity about it, Chief Frechette's comments and the work done by the Ontario Provincial Police. You know the size of those grow-ops.

I'd like to get clarification from someone on the government side on just how far this legislation will allow building departments and utilities to actually go. I'm hoping they will include all that, but from the conversations we've heard today, it sounds like it's more on a residential basis, with larger homes and subdivision developments, that sort of thing, probably where the bulk of the grow-ops are today.

I'm going to wind up now. I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments on this and I thank the minister for bringing forth this piece of legislation. It's been a long time. I've wanted to debate the bill for quite a while and I'm glad we finally had this opportunity today to get this debate started.

I will be supporting the bill. I know I'm quite negative in a lot of areas today, but anything that starts the process we will be happy to support. But I hope the next step will help our police services in some of the recommendations coming from the Green Tide Summit.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Kormos: I'm going to be embarking on a lead-off—it will take us to around 5:30; 4:30 to 5:30—in around eight minutes' time.

Look, I already told you that I like the minister. I have regard for him. I have known him a long time and I consider him capable. However, I don't anticipate being as enthusiastic about this legislation as, for instance, the members of the official opposition.

Quite frankly, I am a little surprised. I thought there was going to be some arm-wrestling here between the Conservative opposition and the Liberal government about who was going to out-law-and-order the other. That may still be coming. I anticipated the Conservative members wanting to prove themselves as even firmer and tougher and harder on scofflaws, and indeed outlaws, than the Liberals ever could be. I expected them to paint the Liberals as soft on crime, soft on criminals, and even to drag in, to demonstrate that relationship, not just the association but the kinship, the sanguine intimacy between provincial Liberals and federal Liberals. If federal Liberals are soft on crime, therefore provincial Liberals must be soft on crime, and vice versa. I expected the Conservative opposition to talk about the Young Offenders Act, among other things. I expected the members of the Conservative opposition to talk about the need to vet judges before they're appointed, and indeed to, after the fact, have political—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Well, I expected that. Did you expect that, Mr. Caplan? It wouldn't be an unfair anticipation.

I know the Conservatives are going to have a chance to participate in this debate and I appreciate—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Dunlop, who has a busy schedule, has had a full week. But you Conservatives should rise to the occasion. This is your opportunity.

1620

The Acting Speaker: The Speaker would like the members to recognize, in the east members' gallery, the member for Middlesex in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments, Doug Reycraft. Would you recognize him.

Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: To the member from Simcoe North, just a comment. He spent a lot of time talking about the 1,000 officers, and some of his information is incorrect, with all due respect. We have committed to the 1,000 officers. That \$30 million was what it would cost per year. But there's no provision that would say there have to be so many this year, so many next year and so many the next. We will do it over the length of our mandate.

We know what the amount is, and it's going to be based on a formula similar to what you had, where under the community policing program there was a shared cost. When you had your particular bill, it was a maximum of \$30,000. Whether that's a relevant number now, we don't know. But certainly, the idea is that we have to work with the communities, because some communities can't afford it no matter what the shared cost is. They say, "You pay 100% or we can't hire anybody." That's a problem, because this has always been intended—we stated it in our platform—to be a shared program.

We will deliver on those 1,000 officers. It doesn't have to be evenly over the term of our mandate. We could do it all in one year; we could do it in two years. But we will do it. But what we have to do, and what we are doing, is to make sure that we consult with the various municipalities. There's a special interest in the north; there's another interest in other municipalities.

We just announced today our new community partnership program, which provides funding for police services. That's what we have to work through, because there are a lot of inequities out there. We have to make sure that we do it and we do it right. I just wanted to say that.

I also have some interesting comments—I don't know whether you meant it; I got the impression you were supporting option 4, which is kind of an interesting thing when in the previous government your minister at the time was opposed to it. Tony Clement was opposed to it. Most people are opposed to it. It's over. I think it's the right thing to do, and I think that it will show the people of Ontario that justice is even and it's dispensed.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to congratulate the member from Simcoe North for his comments on this legislation. I know that as the critic responsible for community safety, he does take all

of these issues very seriously. He certainly has made a concerted effort to ensure that the communities and the people in the province of Ontario are as safe as they possibly can be.

This whole issue of the grow-ops is extremely serious. I can remember, when I became an MPP, having gone to the police station and having seen firsthand what the police were collecting when they went into the homes where these operations were going on. I remember thinking, what a terrible waste of our human resources in dealing with these particular situations. I think it is important that we take whatever action we can in order to get tough on these grow-ops.

I was really quite concerned to learn, when a study was done in 2002, that if you took a look at York, Peel and the region of Waterloo, where I live, combined, 17% of the grow-ops were located within 500 metres of a primary or secondary school. I think we all recognize that for children living within those homes, it's a very unhealthy and unsafe environment. We also know that many children—it was estimated that in 2002-03 there were 10,000 children who might have resided in these grow-op buildings. It is extremely important that everyone work together and do what we can to make our communities safe and certainly to protect the health of our children and families.

Ms. Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This bill, as I understand it, is supposed to make it easier for the police to dismantle and prosecute marijuana grow operations. I understand that that's what it's all about. But as I paid some attention to this debate today, overall it tends to change very little, which is typical of this government. There's a big to-do about all these grand changes that are going to be made and hearing all of this, but looking at the bill, the few real changes that it does make are overboard. The bill is primarily, as with a lot of Liberal bills, for public relations purposes. When you look at the bill, Mr. Speaker, as you know—because you've been listening carefully as well—this bill right here, Bill 128, makes very few actual changes. The Premier and the minister just want to be able to claim that they're tough on crime, while doing as little as possible. That's what's really happening here today.

I'm profoundly disappointed in it, but I'm also disappointed in the rhetoric around these things. I mean, earlier today, I raised—and it was raised by the Conservatives as well—the issue of crime, a man who—it was witnessed—has been charged with first-degree murder of his wife, so-called domestic violence. He's going to be out on bail. I've got to tell you, when we're talking here about crime, I really hope that we don't find out that there was a deal between the crown and the defence on this.

We weren't given any reasons today. I asked a question in the House about this today, and I want to see the government walk the walk when they come in here and start talking about changes they're making. I would much prefer to be talking today about how we're going to

beef up bail charges and make sure that women are safe when there's domestic violence involved.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the minister, Minister Kwinter. I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener-Waterloo, Toronto-Danforth and Niagara Centre for their comments on my initial leadoff.

The bill doesn't have a tremendous amount of substance. We know that. As the minister said, it's a first step, and I think there's an opportunity to support it. There may even be some amendments we could make to the bill. I spent so much of my time today speaking about the 1,000 police officers, and if you can add 1,000 police officers in this mandate and actually have them working, I'll be extremely amazed. I can tell you that right now. I don't think it's going to happen.

It's taken us 18 months to get to the first step in this marijuana grow-op bill. I don't know if it's another 18 months to the second step. Then, we're a few months away from an election. I'm not so sure we're going to see those 1,000 police officers, although I want to say that that's the key part of my thoughts on this bill, because I think it's important that we understand that the police services across our province, across our country, are finding more and more difficult crimes all the time to deal with, and they require more and more resources. So obviously, they become a very big budget item.

If we're going to live in a land of law and order and have safe communities, then I think we have to follow through and provide these organizations with the resources they need ASAP, as quickly as possible. I know that some of the organizations like the municipalities have pressures, but in the end, if we're going to keep communities safe and strong, we have to have the police resources to back that up. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: As I indicated, I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I've already expressed my personal affection for the minister authoring the bill. I've already expressed my surprise that the Tories haven't seized this opportunity to try to out-law-and-order the Liberals and to paint them as soft on crime and indifferent when it comes to the safety and welfare of folks in the community. It won't surprise the minister when I tell him I saw that happen in committee around the gunshot reporting bill.

The Tories were going to outdo the government in committee. They were going to report gunshots. They were going to report hockey stick attacks. They were going to report knife wounds. Everything. They were going to report people stumbling on cracked pavement, skinning their knees.

Mr. Dunlop: We were not.

Mr. Kormos: I'm being hyperbolic, Garfield. For Pete's sake, don't get your knickers in a knot. I'm being illustrative. You don't have to get too fancy, but you know darn well, Mr. Dunlop, that the Tories were trying to out-law-and-order the Libs. But it seems that in this

instance the Tories are ad idem with the Liberals. The Tories are in sync. There has been a convergence.

1630

Now, that doesn't surprise me particularly. We noticed it earlier this week when we were talking about Bill 144, the amendments to the Ontario Labour Relations Act, where we saw Dalton McGuinty rejecting the labour relations policies of Leslie Frost and John Robarts. Dalton McGuinty rejecting the labour relations policies of Bill Davis, Frank Miller, even David Peterson, but Dalton McGuinty planting himself firmly with Mike Harris and Ernie Eves when it comes to labour relations, to wit, denying the vast majority of Ontario workers the right to join a trade union and to certify that union local by virtue of a card-based certification.

You will know that down where I come from, down in Niagara, just a couple of weeks ago there was a much-publicized grow-op out on Highway 3 in Wainfleet. What had happened was that the fuel-driven generators—I don't know for sure whether they were gasoline or diesel—apparently caught fire. It was our firefighters based down in Port Colborne, a strong volunteer component, who had to first enter that greenhouse. Literally it was a historic greenhouse. They had to first enter that operation. They are the ones who identified the plants and reported it to the police, and then the police took over an investigation.

I don't know whether any arrests have been made. I do know that that property—because I was flabbergasted, I was rendered speechless by going to the Web site of—what was it?—the Niagara economic development commission and seeing a copy of a glossy brochure they had been distributing not that long ago advertising Niagara as a place to grow crops, and indeed promoting the Niagara region with its unique climate and soil as a place to engage in horticulture. In fact, listed on the other side of this glossy front page were a number of potential properties for purchasers interested in the growing opportunities in Niagara. There it was, that Highway 3 Wainfleet location being promoted by public tax dollars, and obviously somebody took it seriously, somebody took them at their word.

Let's be fair. Quite frankly, although that's illegal, and we are conceding that, that's not the type of grow-op the minister is talking about in terms of this bill—not bang on. I was at the Green Tide conference kick-off, and I'm grateful the minister's staff accommodated me there. It was a good opportunity to talk to a whole lot of chiefs of police and other policing personnel.

I understand the concern—quite frankly, even out in Wainfleet when they were using diesel or gasoline generators—I don't know which—fuel-driven generators to provide the electricity, it's either an attempt to avoid being bona fide electricity users and thus tipping off the authorities, in this case the local hydroelectric—although I would suspect that since it was a greenhouse operation, it would be expected to have high electricity consumption in any event, right? So I suspect as well that it may have been just an effort on the part of the resident of that

property to avoid having to sign the contract with hydro, or perhaps they were just bona fide back-to-the-earth people, libertarian types, who didn't want to involve themselves in the corporate structure of the community by virtue of being bona fide subscribers to hydro.

I don't dispute that if somebody has a grow-op in a residential setting, as compared to this greenhouse operation out on Highway 3 in Wainfleet, people are going to jump the meter. I've got to tell you I haven't seen that just in grow-ops. I have been to real folks' homes, and I'm shocked and amazed because it's an incredibly dangerous thing to do, although not horribly difficult, and I've seen family heads jump the meter when, for instance, their electricity has been cut off because they haven't paid the bill. Mind you, in those instances there is less likely to be an imminent danger other than the lack of code in the jumping of the input, jumping the meter, because you're not engaging in an extreme consumption of electricity.

The problem, as I understand it, is that if you jump the box, you jump the fuse. You have two fuses. You have the fuse panel and then you have the cartridge fuses, which are before the panel. So if you jump the box, you jump the fuse, in which case have you no fuse whatsoever. Is that a fair understanding of it? So you have no fusing, and that means you're capable of drawing huge amounts of electricity that the wiring is incapable of handling and then inevitably you start fires, so the argument goes, and this is in residential places. Again, Jim Karygiannis is out there, ever vigilant. He's like my old Charley the beagle, sniffing out these marijuana grow operations. I understand that, first of all, they stink. Police will tell you that.

That Molson brewery up in Barrie, in your neck of the woods, Speaker, put Barrie on the map more than once, didn't it? Tragically—not only a maker of fine beer in its day—you'll see that Molson just shut down another factory in Toronto. Did you read about that? Hundreds of jobs were lost there. You'll see that Molson factory on Highway 400. Every time you'd drive up to Barrie or beyond, you'd see the old Molson factory. It was just before the Green Tide, if I recall, that the huge arrest had taken place in the Molson factory. That was one heck of an operation. There was a lot of pot growing there, as compared to down in Niagara, because the problem is that the firefighters were in there. They were putting out a fire right down in Niagara, down at Wainfleet, Highway 3. You see, it was a cucumber operation. I don't know if you've ever grown cucumbers, but cucumbers and the harvesting of cucumbers are critical. The problem is that cucumbers grow incredibly quickly. They will literally overnight increase substantially in size, and you can literally watch a cucumber grow. It's mostly water.

If you grew up down in Niagara like I did, in cucumber farming, cucumber production, because that's what the primary crop was at the greenhouse down in Wainfleet, a so-called grow-op—it was a cucumber grow-op. The problem is that people like Bicks, for instance, have very tough specifications on the size of the cucumber that

they'll accept. So the difficulty in growing cucumbers is not cultivating them, it's in harvesting them, because you've got to work 24/7. Do you understand what I'm saying? If those cucumbers grow an extra half-inch, forget it; the crop is of no value whatsoever because the real consumer—and just the proliferation of cucumbers. You can get a whole lot of cucumbers out of a relatively small number of plants. The problem with cucumbers is that you've got to get them harvested. So cucumber growers will work through the night, frantically harvesting these cucumbers. The problem is that the firefighters, in the context of the confusion around putting out a fire, doing their job and wanting to protect property and life, in this case their own—because the first report is that there were thousands and thousands of marijuana plants in the grow-op down in the greenhouse on Highway 3. Of course, that made good news, and for the briefest of moments Niagara displaced Barrie as the marijuana capital of Ontario. For a moment I felt some pride, and I was actually thinking about you, Speaker. I thought, "Well, I got one up on Tascona." He was proud of Barrie being the marijuana capital of Ontario. But Wainfleet had outnumbered Molson's in Barrie. Alas, it didn't last long. Because once the police got in there and the fire was out and the police were doing their investigation, they realized the firefighters had identified a whole lot of cucumber plants as marijuana plants. I don't know if you have ever tried smoking a cucumber. I've talked to people, and they tell me it's not an easy thing to do.

1640

Mr. Klees: Chewing is a lot better.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Klees prefers his pickled and brined.

So that's the Highway 3 marijuana grow-op—well, it is—that was promoted at taxpayers' dollars. Again, all I knew was that there was somebody sitting in their home with their lawyer's business card in one hand and the phone in the other. I don't know if any arrests have been made, but it's not rocket science, this one. It's not going to be hard to find the person who leased the property. Whether that person is clever enough to have distanced himself or herself from the actual operation remains to be seen.

Mark Evans is a criminal lawyer down in Welland for whom I have high, high regard. In fact, he wrote a letter to the editor a few weeks ago refuting some of the allegations made about the nature of grow operations. It was right after the Wainfleet arrest. He's a very good criminal lawyer. He's very bright and very capable. He was my former partner; I should mention that as well. He started working for me as an articling student. I'm very proud of how well he has done. I suspect that a clever lawyer like Mark Evans will go through every legal trick in the book to try to distance whoever is charged with the actual cultivation. Because it's true what the minister and others have said.

I took a look at the latest edition of Clayton Ruby's *Sentencing*, and the very last entry, in terms of the sentencing ranges for various offences, is on the cultivation

of marijuana, with a maximum sentence of seven years. He notes that the potential sentence is often higher than that or could be higher, because you've got not only cultivation but possession, then, for the purpose of trafficking, although he notes still once again—and you'll understand this—that the totality principle prevails. In closing this brief section, Ruby, in his text Sentencing, says, "Penalties for cultivation tend to range on a lower scale than those for trafficking, particularly where the offender has no prior record or where the commercial enterprise is a small one."

Then it goes on to talk about 15-month community-served sentences, a \$6,500 fine and 12 months' probation. Oh, my goodness, here are 1,535 plants. That's a pretty big operation, with a value of approximately \$500,000.

He writes that the British Columbia Court of Appeal—oh, that's British Columbia—"substituted a three-month custodial term with a one-year conditional sentence." In other words, the British Columbia Court of Appeal said no jail term and a one-year conditional sentence.

What we do know is that there are tons and tons of this stuff being grown out there. I bet you that if you were to canvass this chamber—notwithstanding that there are tons of this stuff being grown, it seems that nobody's smoking it. Think about it. There are tons and tons and tons and tons being grown, and there's obviously a whole lot of money being made doing it.

I had an opportunity to do a little talking head exchange with the chief of the Hamilton police force, whom I know and for whom I have great regard.

I've heard the comment about Canadian pot travelling across the border and being smuggled into the United States. Understand, the huge amounts of pot that people traffic in to make the huge amounts of money we're talking about are literally in bales of pot, like hay bales or similar to it, I presume. They take a whole lot of space and, quite frankly, they stink. Have you ever been to a rock concert? Do you know that funky, skunky, barnyardy smell? That's not Daily Mail tobacco, Speaker. Well, it isn't. You're going, "What the heck? Did somebody just walk through a barnyard on their way here? Did they forget to take off their work boots?" That's kids—as it is, more often than not, their parents—smoking pot. I don't care whether it's Neil Diamond or Neil Sedaka. That's what that smell is.

So the stuff stinks to boot. As a matter of fact, one of the ways that people detect marijuana grow operations, these residential grow houses, is the smell. One of the problems that I presume the grow operators have to deal with is the smell of their operation, because that, I'm sure, gives a police officer reasonable and probable grounds to get a search warrant and barge in there.

If I'm not incorrect, Jim Karygiannis talked about sniffing at the front doors of houses he knocked on. An unusual sight: Here's your local member of Parliament sniffing as you open the door to say hello. He's not extending his hand saying, "Good afternoon, sir or

madam"; he's there sniffing like a character out of a John Waters movie, for Pete's sake. The stuff stinks.

I have concern about the claim—this is just an aside—that our marijuana, Ontario pot, is being smuggled across the border. I don't know about you, but especially since 9/11, I can't go over to Buffalo and get a Ted's hot dog and get that back. No disrespect, but I can't get that back without an astute customs and immigration officer wanting to know where the hot dog came from, how much I paid for it and is there anything else in the trunk? So I don't understand how what have got to be huge cube-truckfuls of pot are getting across the border.

Indeed, some recent news reports in the Toronto Star suggest that there have been relatively infrequent—they've occurred, but infrequently—busts, arrests, of big amounts of marijuana crossing the border.

Now, I saw that movie with Johnny Depp about drug smuggling, cocaine. The reason why these guys smuggle cocaine is because it has high value and is very compact. It's easier to smuggle. Hashish is easier to smuggle. These pills, Ecstasy and—I'm not sure how much amphetamines are being transported, but 30 years ago amphetamines were a street drug, a very dangerous one, that was common—are being smuggled because you can get a huge concentration of drug in a small package.

So I'm not sure. I hear what people are saying about marijuana traveling into the States. I'm also hard pressed—here we are, a province of, what, 12 million or 12.5 million, and we're supplying a 300-million-population America? I've heard people talk about Tijuana gold, but I've never heard anybody talk about Barrie gold.

Look, there's this huge unprotected border between Mexico and the United States, and it seems to me that all of that southern United States—I like the South, I really do. I like American people; I like the southern US. But you've got places there that are remote. You and I both read about these back-to-the-woods people, these survivalist types, in the United States, the ones who reject government, sometimes dangerously so. But I'm hard pressed not to believe that there are huge amounts of pot being grown, especially in the southern United States, with its 12-month growing season.

For the life of me, in terms of the population, I am hard pressed to believe that Ontario is feeding the demand in the United States, because I do know this: There's a tremendous demand for this stuff. If there weren't, people wouldn't be growing it. Especially pot, because, as I say, there are other drugs which people have predilections for as well that are more compact, more concentrated and would seem to be more profitable at the end of the day.

So there's clearly a huge consumer base for this stuff. It's not just a couple of people smoking it; it's not just a handful of people smoking it. I suspect, being part of that post-war baby boom, with all the things that accompanied growing up in the 1950s and the post-Eisenhower era, you remember that well. We're talking Woodstock here. We're talking about a generation then that was

exposed to marijuana in a way that their parents never were, simply because it became ubiquitous. It did. So you talk about a generation of parents who probably spent their adult lifetimes hiding their stash from their kids, rather than their kids hiding their stash from them. It's true.

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I'm not saying smoking marijuana is good for you or good for your body. I'm loath to endorse yet another drug, because we are an incredibly drugged society, an incredibly drugged culture, if not by our doctors, then self-medicated, or the collaboration of the two. You see how we've got ads in magazines now, Time magazine and so on, where the drug manufacturers want to appeal directly to the consumer: "You want drug XYZ. Go to your doctor and prescribe for yourself." And doctors, busy as they are, may from time to time be inclined to say, "If my patient says he or she wants mood modifier XYZ, and they read about it in this glossy, full-page ad in Time magazine"—as I understand it, it's only the Americans who permit that kind of advertising. We don't permit it yet in Canada, but of course, there's the crossover that's incredible. You've seen it as well in television advertisements.

We are a heavily drugged society. Whether your choice of poison is good old-fashioned hard liquor or any number of sophisticated and increasingly complex designer-type mood modifying drugs or, as I believe it to be for a huge number of people, pot, people are taking these drugs. Is it a good thing? No, of course not. But unfortunately, we're not debating that broader social issue here and now.

So let's talk about what? Accepting the fact that a grow-op—and we're talking about a commercial-size grow-op. Hell, my old man, before he died, had a marijuana plant. He was 80 years old. It grew outside his back door, out at his farmhouse. It's a true story. I never asked him whether he smoked it or not. He was as straight as an arrow, but he just got a kick out of growing a marijuana plant. I don't know what he did with it. He loved tinkering with stuff. He kept bees for a while and made honey. I remember he borrowed a still from Atlas Steels and created an industrial-type still from the lab. He was making moonshine in the still, just to be able to do it. He made his own wine, so he wanted to see the distilling process. He'd read. He'd get books and he'd research these things, and he had this marijuana plant growing outside his back door. As I say, he's dead now. There's nothing you can do to him. The plant died too. It's but a memory.

All I'm saying is that this stuff is ubiquitous. So I appreciate the frustration, because when we hear about the number of grow-ops, these grow-ops are ubiquitous as well. You go and get these hydroponic grow lights and you use the hydroponics, where you grow it in water, right? You don't need sandy soil. What we learned is that it's not too hard to grow this stuff. I don't know whether it has to be cured the way tobacco does, hung and basically fermented over a period of time, or not. But

people seem to know how to do it, and Lord knows, there are any number of resources available at Indigo bookstore. You don't have to go underground. You don't have to go to your local corner book dealer, who pulls out of his or her jacket in a plain brown envelope some book about growing pot.

Mr. Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Remember, the pages are listening. Be careful what you say.

Mr. Kormos: No, on the contrary; you don't have to. You think these young people don't know it? I'm not accusing or suggesting any of them of misconduct, but this is the brightest generation that the province has ever enjoyed. These kids are on the Internet. They're into books and reference materials that we wouldn't have even thought of at their age. They're grade 7 and 8 students.

So here's this ubiquitous weed and this admitted problem around residential grow-ops. Problem: Why? The electricity issue—and I agree with that. I don't dispute that at all, because I know enough about electricity and wiring to know how dangerous it is. Then, of course, it's not just that the house is going to burn down, but that firefighters have to respond, and every time a firefighter or other emergency response personnel member attends to a place like that, they put themselves at risk, and of course neighbours, with houses, especially in cities like Toronto or newer subdivisions, where you can't even walk between the two houses. So I understand that problem.

But for the life of me, I'd like somebody to explain how it is that the local hydroelectric commission can't pull the plug on an electricity consumer who's jumped the meter in any event. It seems to me that we don't need legislation to permit the local hydroelectric commission from clipping the wires, proverbially, to a house where somebody's jumped the meter. That's, of course, as far as I know, an offence in and of itself. The Attorney General could do some research on this if he wanted to, perhaps hire some high-priced legal help, but, heck, it's theft. So that's an offence in and of itself.

Again, I appreciate that it becomes even more dramatic when it's a grow-op because of the high consumption of electricity, presumably because of the lighting that's used. But it also seems to me that the local hydroelectric commission has the capacity to detect and identify this, because this bill doesn't enhance the capacity to detect or identify.

We've also, insofar as I'm aware, read court rulings where clever defence lawyers, people like Mark Evans down in Welland—it's amazing how many of his clients are innocent—have done their best. Well, no, it's amazing. Look, the police go to all this work. There are piles and piles of evidence at trial. Mark Evans goes in with them, and they're found not guilty. So I just shake my head. What's going on? All these innocent people. How come Mark Evans gets all the innocent clients? Think about it.

Charlie Ryall is another one. All of his clients are innocent. There are some other lawyers who handle

nothing but guilty clients, but Charlie Ryall and Mark Evans, all they've got are innocent clients. This must be the most concentrated miscarriages of justice that you ever saw. All the innocent clients just go to Charlie Ryall and Mark Evans. I can't understand it.

First of all, there's the Criminal Code. It's theft. Secondly, Hydro, it seems to me—and somebody's going to correct me if I'm wrong—doesn't need any legislation to pull the plug to clip the wires on an operation where the wires are illegally hooked up or hooked up contrary to code such that they constitute a hazard.

As I was getting back to the lawyers, notwithstanding the best efforts of those clever defence lawyers, the Mark Evanses and Charlie Ryalls of the world, it seems to me that the appellate courts have just ruled that it's OK—correct me if I'm wrong—for the police to use the airplane-helicopter surveillance detecting hotspots, basically, that that is not an unlawful search. What an incredible tool for the cops.

The problem is, as we all know, the cops don't have the staff, the helicopters or the finances to finance those helicopters when they're up in the air, because it's expensive to keep one up and utilize the various thermal imaging, that type of equipment. The cops have got the law. The law says that that type of surveillance—and apparently a grow house jumps up on this thermal imaging; it's a hotspot—would give the police, again, the legal grounds to get a search warrant, and there may be other things that cause these hotspots, but the police will still get the search warrants. That's the problem as well: getting the search warrants and getting the police officers assembled to do the kind of raids on these places. You can't expect one or two cops to go in alone, because there could be anything in there.

I acknowledge that an outlaw biker gang or an illegal gang, an organized crime gang, that's worried about being ripped off by other gangs is going to utilize things like traps, hazards, for people entering it. So I don't expect the cops to go there understaffed. That's nuts. We shouldn't expect them to go there understaffed. And they don't, by and large.

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So where does this take us again? It's not the need for more law; it's the need for more police officers. Of course, it's not just the investigation and then the actual apprehension and the collection of evidence; then you've got the trial process.

I remember as a lawyer being overjoyed with the Rowbotham case. Rowbotham was a hashish smuggler. As a matter of fact, he's a CBC personality now. He is. He's a fascinating guy, and he spent a few years in jail in eastern Canada. Rowbotham was the source of more good case law for defence lawyers than any other single criminal drug dealer in this province. He was just a benign, sort of jolly hashish smuggler. As I say, now he's a CBC celebrity. He's an investigative reporter; he does special programming for CBC radio. But he's been a source of wonderful tools for defence counsel.

The cops have got the law; they just don't have the resources. It's not just the surveillance. Surveillance in and of itself is incredibly labour-intensive, because you not only want to identify the grow-op location, as that seems to be one of the easier things, you also want to connect the operators of it to that location, which means, more often than not, surveillance. Surveillance is a very expensive process. I know that from the old days. Even the slightest gap in surveillance and the case could be shot all to heck.

Once again, this is labour intensive. And then these same police officers, once the matter goes to trial—that's why I mentioned Rowbotham, because lawyers made a fortune and did great work for Rowbotham. But you've got lengthier and lengthier trials taking place. Police officers have to be there during the course of those trials as witnesses and as assistants to the crown, assisting the crown attorney.

I say that regardless of where you are on the marijuana argument, you've got to concede that, at the end of the day, apprehending illegal activity is about more police officers, more trained police officers, police officers with the tools to do the job and the sort of resources dedicated to them.

But I want to go beyond that for just a second because one of the results of that tragedy in Alberta where four RCMP officers were slaughtered—it was just an incredible tragedy. Now, at the end of the day, we learned that this was not primarily a grow operation and that, in fact, even more tragically, these RCMP officers were being sent there, as I understood it, as part of a repo exercise, repossessing a vehicle from a guy who's just a total sociopathic kind of personality. It was inevitable that he kill somebody at some point. I'm sure that over the course of even the next months, there will be all sorts of analysis about how the system failed those four police officers in terms of this guy. Because I believe it mostly is the shortcomings of the system, not the law in and of itself. It's amazing, this guy who slaughtered these cops had lengthy arrest records, some of the most horrendous crimes, but at the end of the day, he never really ended up serving time. Again, serving time? Big deal. For a guy like that, serving six months, a year or two years means nothing. It means nothing whatsoever.

But one of the results of that was a little mini-debate, certainly in Ontario and, I suspect, across the country, about how we really address the issue of the grow-ops and the inherent hazards in grow-ops, conceding that there are inherent hazards, if only for firefighters and police who are called upon to respond to either fires or in the course of arrests. That inevitably took us, then, to the fact that prohibition isn't working. Now, merely saying prohibition isn't working is not in and of itself an argument for decriminalization or legalization. I understand that. There are a lot of laws that are incredibly difficult to enforce. On laws against speeding on the highway—heck, you're on the 400 every night. What does the law against speeding have to do with enforcing the speed limit on the 400? Nothing. So one could similarly say,

"Well, the prohibition against exceeding 100 kilometres an hour on the 400 series highways isn't working, so let's legalize 150 kilometres an hour." So I can see that the mere acknowledgment that prohibition isn't working is not an argument for decriminalization and legalization.

However, look what the federal Liberals are doing: They seem to be embarked on a very clear course of decriminalization, and decriminalization is but a hair's width away from legalization. Decriminalization: You might as well say "legalization." Look, we know that by and large, simple possession arrests are not the priority of police officers, in any event. Contrast that with 30 or 35 years ago when I was a kid and, at that point, people were still going to jail for simple possession of very small amounts. Those days are long gone; they're over. More and more police officers use their discretion if they find—what is it?—a baggie of weed. They'll simply throw it away or seize it and not regard it as worthy of an arrest and a charge, because we know what the tariff is in courts for simple possession. If, in fact, somebody ever gets charged with simple possession, the conditional discharge is the common sentence or diversion.

Now, maybe people are proposing returning to a point in time when simple possession got teenage kids—young men and women—six, nine, 12 and 18 months in reformatories. I can't remember the name of the author of that well-known Canadian play, *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. As you well know—you recall that play—it was an incredibly graphic, violent play about a young, middle-class kid busted for simple possession of marijuana and tossed into a very dangerous and scary Guelph reformatory, the Guelph reformatory of Roger Caron. You know him, the author who spent most of his life in jail. You'll recall Caron just beat a number of robbery charges, and his defence was he didn't do the beggar robberies. He didn't do what he called "beggar robberies," where you write a note and hand it over. Caron, with pride would say, "When I rob a joint, I'm in there with a gun. There's no begging for the money." He was acquitted on these charges because it doesn't fit his profile. He's very sick; he's a very sick man right now. He wrote *Go-Boy!*, which was his book out of the Guelph reformatory. Then he wrote a wonderful, roman à clef type of book on the Kingston prison riot, which gave rise to the shift over to Millhaven, where they are transferring the inmates. Roger Caron: I commend him as an author; his first and seminal book, *Go-Boy!*, about his time in the Guelph reformatory.

Who wrote the play *Fortune and Men's Eyes*? Mr. McMeekin? *Fortune and Men's Eyes*. A Canadian playwright. I need the author. In any event, it's about a middle-class kid who gets busted for simple possession of marijuana, serving months—because that's what the tariffs were back when you and I were kids. Pretty horrendous stuff.

So it's clear that everybody is agreeing—I don't hear anybody disagreeing—that simple possession should be prosecuted at the same level as it was 35 years ago. If there's anybody suggesting that simple possession, the

19- or 20-year-old caught with a joint or two joints or however many outside a rock concert should go to jail in the Guelph reformatory and serve six or nine or 12 months' prison sentence, please say so—and be criminalized.

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I'll put this to you: I've known a lot of police officers over a lengthy period of time, and I know lots of stories from police officers about having to bust up drunken barroom brawls and the inherent danger in that. Cops barge into those insane scenarios of people all drunk as skunks and wild. But I've never heard of a cop who got his back injured in a brawl between a couple of stoners at a Grateful Dead concert; I just haven't heard that story yet. I'm not sure that those stories are as frequent. And when I say stories, I'm not talking fiction: A beer room brawl is a very dangerous thing for a cop to wade into. But as I say, I'm not aware of very many police officers who have suffered broken arms, horribly injured backs and have gone on workers' comp in a brawl between two stoners at a Grateful Dead concert. Again, I'm not saying that that in and of itself justifies the legalization of marijuana.

I do know this: I know that there are Canadians, there are Ontarians who are licensed to possess and use marijuana because it is a proven and effective—the only effective—means of dealing with pain or glaucoma or the nausea that people with AIDS and HIV and cancer victims suffer, amongst other things. For the life of me, I can't understand why somebody's grandmother with glaucoma should have to go to the pool hall and buy pot from a biker when she's licensed and legally entitled to possess it and smoke it as a relevant medical treatment. Why should somebody's grandmother have to buy drugs from a criminal lowlife when those drugs have been prescribed as an effective and relevant medical treatment? That's nuts. That's crazy. That's not fair.

I read the other weekend another biography of Paul Bowles. He was a composer—Aaron Copland and that group of left-wing composers—and also an author. He and his wife, Jane Bowles, lived in Tangier for all of their lives. She died much sooner than he; she had serious mental health problems. I can remember from reading the book, once he got to Tangier—he got there in the late 1930s and lived there throughout his life; he died just a few years ago, at the age of 87 years old, if I remember correctly from the biography—he lived on a steady diet of majoun, because in Tangier this majoun was served to a guest. In Morocco it was eventually illegalized, but that didn't stop its consumption. People ate it for breakfast, for Pete's sake.

Bowles, I've got to tell you, remained prolific as a writer, as a thinker, as an intellectual, as an observer of the world. Here's a guy who sat at the feet of Gertrude Stein in Paris, who, as I say, composed with Aaron Copland, who mentored a young Leonard Bernstein in New York City and who was a very active member of the left in the United States—the hard left—at a time when it

had serious consequences. So he lived on this daily diet of majoun.

In my note to the library, I only spelled it "majou," but I said to the library, "Could you give me the correct wording?" They actually sent me a recipe for it: "According to Peter Lamborn Wilson," this one "Sufi order of Morocco is entirely devoted to the ritual, meditational and magical uses of cannabis. Majoun is, perhaps, the most legendary of all psychoactive confections: a potent blend of dried fruits, nuts, spices, honey and cannabis."

Ms. Churley: And chocolate, sometimes.

Mr. Kormos: My colleague from Toronto-Danforth, who seems to have some expertise, tells me that chocolate can be a component. That may be a New World addition.

Bowles writes about literally writing music after eating majoun; about writing literature after it. Ginsberg and Burroughs were paying homage to him in the 1960s. They were traveling as mendicants to worship Paul Bowles in the 1960s.

"Majoun: ¼ ounce tops cannabis sativa, crumbled, stems and seeds removed; 1 cup chopped dates; ½ cup raisins; ½ cup ground walnuts"—this came from the legislative library—"1 teaspoon ground nutmeg; 1 teaspoon anise seed; 1 teaspoon dried ginger; ½ cup honey; ½ cup water (more if needed); 2 tablespoons melted butter or ghee."

Then you cook this up—

Ms. Churley: Mix it all up.

Mr. Kormos: Mix it all up, Ms. Churley says.

Clearly, grow-ops fall into at least two classes. One is the hard-core criminal enterprise, and I don't know the proportion. I do know that the Molson operation up in your neck of the woods—Barrie, right in your backyard, Speaker. Couldn't you just smell that stuff as you were driving back and forth to work? These are your constituents.

Surely the Barrie operation, with its size, is a considerable operation, and we're finding out in due course what is happening with those charges. Not a whole lot is happening with those charges, is it? There were some guilty pleas and other people are being cut loose, and the penalties, as Ruby points out in his sentencing text, are not particularly substantial.

I don't know the level of criminality of that group, but I'm going to assume that because of its size and of keeping an operation that big secret, it's organized. And since it's crime, it's organized crime. I'm prepared to go with that. I'm prepared to concede that somewhere there have got to be biker gangs—I say that in the general sense; I should say "outlaw biker gangs"—involved in this. Maybe they're selling it rather than actually growing it.

But I'm also hard-pressed not to believe that, just like my 80-year-old father with a plant behind his house at the back door, there are people who grow it in pots on their window sill—"pots"; in crockery, that you plant plants in—and who presumably then smoke it. I'm sure

there are people with grow-ops in their basement that are not the hypercriminal sorts of activities that the minister and police speak of. I'm sure there are very small operations. There have got to be, because if you read the sentencing reports, there are very small operations, there are mid-sized operations and then there are those full-blown Molson-Barrie operations.

I am not about to deny that the production of this stuff is in the tonnes. We heard that at the Green Tide: a huge amount. Again, much of this is based on speculation. I know it's not just grow-ops. We're talking here about the stuff where you need the lights and you need the electricity because it's not outdoors. If the stuff's growing outside, you don't have the danger of borrowed electricity, right?

Quite frankly, I was so pleased with the Minister of Agriculture for recommending hemp as an alternate product for tobacco farmers out on Highway 3, the Delhi-Simcoe-Cayuga-Tillsonburg area. Boy, Stompin' Tom Connors would have something to sing about then, wouldn't he, down at the German hall in Delhi, with all those Belgian and Hungarian and German tobacco farmers or children of tobacco farmers who are now being put out of business.

1720

So the question that was raised is, how do you really undermine the criminal operation? Look, nobody seems to care about the person who grows a pot plant on the windowsill. It's illegal. I'm not going to say it's not illegal; it's illegal. The way the criminal law is going to be amended, as it applies to controlled substances, it's not going to be illegal, very much soon down the road.

The problem with the decriminalization/legalization program is that that is the job of the federal government because they write the Controlled Substances Act. But when you decriminalize or legalize a substance like pot, you presumably increase an already high demand for it. You increase the demand because then there is no chance of getting a criminal record if you are in possession of it. But to decriminalize it without controlling and regulating it means that you make even more money for the illegal drug dealers. To decriminalize/legalize marijuana without controlling and regulating it, you create greater incentive for grow-ops in the Barrie style or the huge residential ones the minister has often spoken about, with two floors of an apartment building where people drill through the floor to run the cable, I presume. So it seems to me absolutely nuts to talk about decriminalizing or legalizing the stuff without similarly controlling and regulating it.

I actually dusted off the old report of the Canadian Government Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical Use of Drugs; the Le Dain commission, Mr. Justice Le Dain and his commissioners. These people, once again, were not Jerry Garcia fans. This was a very conservative group of people, including a highly acknowledged Canadian jurist, I'm sure the Attorney General will agree, Mr. Justice Le Dain. This was back in 1972. Even the most conservative member of that commission

said, because there were a number of reports, "Surely, you've got to decriminalize this stuff." Others talked about it outright because they addressed the control and regulation issue. The fact is that an illegal drug dealer could care less how old the kid is whom he or she sells pot or any other drug to. I agree; get this stuff out of the hands of criminals and don't criminalize the person who possesses one or two joints. Get this stuff out of the hands of the criminals, because criminals could care less whether they sell to a 12-year-old or a 22-year-old.

If we decriminalize and legalize marijuana, as the federal government is about to do, without then addressing the need for control and regulation, we are enhancing the profits for criminal operators and criminal drug traffickers. We are increasing the dangers to the extent that they exist, that have been outlined by the Solicitor General, the Minister of Public Safety, in his criticism, much of it valid in my view, of grow-ops and the need to suppress them.

We take Jim Karygiannis away from the important work that he could be doing in his constituency office. Understand that he is a very important MP. I know him; I like him. He is a character. He has skills that are far too valuable for him to waste his time sniffing at people's front doors across his riding. The image—because he is a big man; he is bigger than I am. I'm no box of chocolates but he is a big guy. The image of Jim Karygiannis down there on his hands and knees on somebody's threshold, sniffing—you know how you can feel the air travel underneath the door if there isn't the gasket there. There is Jim Karygiannis, the slacks are starting to fall down a little bit on his rump and he's bent over; the shirt's pulled up. You've got that unsightly scene. You've got Jim Karygiannis sniffing down at the threshold to see if there's pot in that house, with his posse, with his aldermanic posse. Jim's got more important stuff to do. Look, he's nice. He's very active in the immigrant community, and I know he does a lot of good work with new Canadians; he really does.

Think about that. If you take the profit out of this stuff, you send organized crime packing. You take the profit out of it and control and regulate it, because everybody is agreed—it was interesting. There was a John Stuart Mill reference in the Le Dain Commission report, which I hadn't recalled, perhaps because I read it in the 1970s; it's been 30 years since I read it. The authors of the commission report, in terms of expressing the John Stuart Mill position, that even Mill would advocate controlling access to people who are underage, who are minors, who aren't adults.

So I'm eager to see this bill tested by the debate in terms of this. Requiring building inspectors to go into a place that's a marijuana grow-op: What does that have to do with eliminating the phenomenon of marijuana grow-ops? It seems to me, nothing. It has a great deal to do with building code and building safety. If you're renting a place and you're using it for a criminal activity, you're going to scam anyway. You're not going to stick around. You're not going to say, "Oh well, if there's any damage,

call me. Here's the number you can reach me at." You didn't give the landlord your right name anyway. You'd be a fool to have done that. So sending the building inspector in—God bless—has got nothing to do with controlling grow-ops per se.

Cutting the wires to a place that's got the illegal electricity hookup, where they use jumper cables effectively to bypass the meter and the fuses: Tell me if I'm wrong, but I understand that your local hydro commission has the capacity to move in there and pull those jumper cables, to shut that down, in any event. They do. We now have thermal imaging and the law stating clearly that police officers can scan a whole community. They can scan all of Toronto, however many hours it would take, and pick out every hot spot in the city. The police have got the law to enable them to identify grow-ops. They don't have the staffing to bust them, never mind prosecute them.

So I appreciate the motive of the minister, but I'm saying that if we're going to talk about marijuana grow-ops and organized crime and trafficking in marijuana, we had better reflect on the Le Dain Commission and what the federal government is doing now, and the real need, which is the need to control and regulate. People are smoking this stuff whether you like it or not—sorry; that's just the reality of it—but I want a regime wherein we're as assured as we possibly can be that kids don't have access to it. I want a regime where we're as assured as we possibly can be that the place where somebody gets their marijuana, whether they're a medical user or otherwise, isn't the same guy that's going to be peddling crack cocaine. That's what my interest is.

I'm interested in the debate. I think Ontarians are mature enough, Canadians are mature enough, to have it. I just wish I had one tenth of Paul Bowles's creativity, with or without the majoun.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Interruption.

Mrs. Sandals: That's actually not me. Who is making funny noises? Peter? I don't know.

I'm pleased to respond to the comments of the member from Niagara Centre. Let's talk a bit about what this is not about. This is not about decriminalizing the use of small amounts of marijuana: (1) That's a federal responsibility; (2) We agree with it. It's not the issue here.

It's not about the fact that people who have been approved for medical use of marijuana have difficulty in accessing it. That's a federal issue. That's not what we're discussing here. It's not even about the recipe for majoun.

Now, I recognize this is new information, but I don't think this is a large problem in the province of Ontario. We're not dealing with that. In fact, we're not dealing with somebody who's got a couple of plants in the garden shed or on the kitchen windowsill, because what we're specifically dealing with are cases where there is a large-scale grow-op—to answer Mr. Dunlop's question—either in a residence or in some other sort of

building. In a building, you've got a large-scale grow-op. That's what we're dealing with.

1730

If you've got grandma, who's got a plant on her windowsill, she's not going to be stealing electricity. She's not going to be knocking the house apart and having structural defects created because she's knocked the house apart. She's not going to be violating the building code. What we're specifically dealing with are those things which are a violation of the building code, which are of the Criminal Code, of the fire code, and we are providing extra authority to deal with those issues.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments on the member from Niagara Centre's full one-hour leadoff of the New Democratic Party. It's always interesting to listen to the wide variety of thoughts he has on a particular leadoff, especially one that's as difficult to speak to as this particular piece of legislation.

I caught his comments a couple of times, and I'm back to my thoughts on the resources that the police services need to combat this industry. You can call it an industry. I'm told it's in the hundreds of millions, possibly billions, of dollars here in the province of Ontario. As the minister said earlier, this a first step—it's not the be-all and end-all—but it's a step that will help some of the municipalities with their thoughts and actions on the marijuana grow operations.

He did mention a few times in his comments about the need for additional resources, and that's where I have to back him up 100%. I think it's going to be the step we have to take, that we have to move forward with next, as we look at the next step or part II of actions on the Green Tide report or the Green Tide Summit. I think it's important that this criminal activity not get that far out of reach that we can never catch up to it. The problem we have now is that there are so many areas of law and order where, when you get into gang violence and the distribution of illegal weapons, this sort of thing, we just need so many police officers and resources to fight these kinds of criminal activities.

So, with that, I do appreciate the fact that the member from Niagara Centre has brought some good points forward today. I look forward to further debate on this important issue.

Ms. Churley: I'm pleased to respond to the speech by the member for Niagara Centre. Speaking as a grandma here—I won't go any further—I found the—

Interjection: What's on your windowsill?

Ms. Churley: What's on my windowsill, you ask? You know, the majoun.

Mr. Kormos: A pickle plant.

Ms. Churley: A pickle plant. That's right. I distinctly remember there being lots of chocolate in it. A whole different attitude—and it shows cultural differences as well, where in Morocco, when I travelled there, this was done pretty openly, whereas alcohol was what was taboo, completely the opposite of how we view things here culturally.

What the member for Niagara Centre said that's really critical, and everything that he said in analyzing this bill today, is that it's not going to work without the control and regulation piece of it. It's kind of like the pit bull legislation. People out there are led to believe that it's really going to make a difference and that the pit bull bites are going to stop, but the reality is, when you analyze that bill like this bill, it gives the illusion that this is really going to shut down these places. We're all very concerned about these places. This will be just a drop in the bucket. What the member for Niagara Centre is talking about is that we have to be bold and just say it like it is, as he did: People are using marijuana. I think it should be dealt with.

One of the reasons I always am so vehemently opposed to the privatization of the LCBO, of selling beer and wine in corner stores and stuff, is that we have found a way overall—not perfect, of course—because it's so regulated, to keep alcohol out of kids' hands. It works relatively well; not perfect. We don't have the same situation with drugs because of the criminal element, and we are not dealing with that here. That is my biggest problem with this bill.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I have just a few comments on those of the member for Niagara Centre. Now I think I am more conversant on how to grow cucumbers and have a better understanding. I still haven't figured out how to smoke them, though, Peter. I'm sure we'll go there.

When we look at this piece of legislation, it's certainly moving in the right direction. This activity is growing. You're right, it's not an industry, but whatever we want to call it, it's certainly growing. One of the things that worries me if we don't try to put an end to these mega grow operations is that, coming from a rural riding, it's really spreading. I talked to some of the local police chiefs in my area, from Cobourg and Port Hope, and the OPP that patrol the smaller communities, and now they're seeing it quite distinctly in our communities. They get on a remote road somewhere in Cramahe township in my riding—obscure. But at the end of the day they are still abusing the hydro; they're still putting firefighters at risk if there's an incident. So I would probably say it's even worse in rural Ontario because we don't have the resources. We don't have a fire station on every corner. We're not expected to have to deal with it as an everyday issue.

So we need to push this legislation. Will it do away with all the mega grow operations? Well, that's hard to say. But it's certainly a start in the right direction. I think all sides of the House should not have any hesitation to move forward and at least get this done. Give those authorities, whether it's building officials, firefighters or the police, greater authority to deal with the issue.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: I appreciate the patience that this chamber has had with me today. But the point that you made, sir, is exactly the point, and that is that clearly

there is an incredible demand for this product. An incredible demand. And it's across the province. Because if there weren't, you wouldn't have tons of it being grown—and I don't dispute what you say—in an increasing manner. We don't have enough cops to bust all the grow-ops based on the observations about how quickly these things are growing—that is, the grow-ops are growing. At the end of the day, the real issue surely has to be how you take the profit out of the production of this stuff so that people don't have organized crime, illegal grow-ops of the dangerous sort that you've talked about and that the Solicitor General, the Minister of Public Safety, has talked about, along with so many others.

Now, I do caution the government, because I'm sure that the minister is well aware that professor Alan Young has cautioned the government about this legislation and the prospect of it being ultra vires. We've heard the minister being very careful in his language, because his very skilful staff have explained to him that you've got to be careful to say certain things and not say others so that you can escape the ultra vires argument that was articulated in Westendorp and the Queen, a Supreme Court ruling in 1983 around a Calgary bylaw. So you'll hear the minister persistently trying to couch this in terms of bylaws and electricity and building code, rather than trying to shut down grow-ops. That's why the government can't have it both ways: One is a law-and-order issue and the other isn't. I'm interested to see how the debate develops.

1740

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke–Lakeshore): I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton Centre. I want to spend a few minutes talking a little bit about why this legislation is important, whom it is seeking to protect and what it will be undertaking.

This legislation is the first step on the part of the government in the development of a comprehensive provincial strategy to help create stronger and safer communities, in my community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and all across the province.

In the last number of years we have seen across this province, in particular across the GTA, and beyond, a proliferation of grow-ops operating out of residential facilities. There certainly is a consensus among many professionals and experts in the field—community activists, police, firefighters, the private sector, municipal inspectors—that these grow operations are creating threats in our communities. This legislation is starting to create a working partnership between all of those groups that can help resolve this important issue. Working with police, combined with local municipal inspectors, electrical utilities, the private sector and fire prevention officials, we need to start taking a concerted, co-operative effort against indoor marijuana grow operations in a sustained and coordinated way. That's what this legislation is about. It is starting the process to put that in place.

We are also looking at many other options and steps for the next steps that need to be taken in this fight, focusing for instance on giving police and others the tools they need to be able to fight, find and shut down these operations. But I think sometimes in the context of the debate—we heard a lot from the member for Niagara Centre—we forget to talk about why we are doing this and what we are trying to stop.

I want to give a few facts. In 2002, grow-ops were estimated to have cost Ontario nearly a hundred million dollars, and as much as 85% of those financial losses stemmed from the large amounts of electricity that grow operations routinely steal from Ontario's electrical utilities. That is one of the things this legislation is trying to combat: the stealing of electricity that cost all Ontarians a hundred million dollars in 2002.

The other thing that I think is important to talk about is the safety of our communities, that grow operations in a private dwelling are 40 times more likely to have a fire. We just need to watch the nightly news to know what the consequences of a fire in a residential community are for the entirety of that community. Many innocent people are affected by that fire.

We also, in this legislation, need to think about children, who are very much at risk when they grow up in grow-op activity. We often find, when these residential grow-op facilities are found, that children live in the grow-op facilities. To make it seem like it truly is a family home and have an air of legitimacy to the residents, individuals live in there with their families. Thousands of Ontario children have unfortunately resided in these grow-op dwellings over the 2002-03 period.

Because they are in residences, these operations are also in the hearts of our communities, close to our schools and close to other individuals' homes. In 2002, in York, Peel and Waterloo regions combined, 17% of grow-ops were located within 500 metres of a primary or secondary school. Getting at things like that is at the heart of what this legislation is about.

There are also health risks for those living in grow houses, from the mould associated with the hydroponic cultivation to the chemicals used to foster plant growth and the high concentrations of carbon dioxide and monoxide in those operations.

To give us a sense of the magnitude of this problem across the province, in 2001, Toronto police dismantled 33 indoor marijuana grow operations—33; less than 50. In 2003, that number rose to 140, certainly more than three times the amount, and preliminary figures from 2004 show us that already there have been 248 indoor operations dismantled with a street value of more than \$83.2 million. So I think that in the context of the debate that will continue on Bill 128, it's important to have those facts at the forefront to recognize what the ails are in our society that we are trying to combat, what we are trying to do and whose lives we are trying to better when we bring forward this legislation.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm happy to stand today to speak on Bill 128. In case anybody is

still watching and wondering what we're talking about, we are talking about legislation to combat residential indoor grow operations.

When we're speaking about legislation, I always like to try and relate it to my experience as a former municipal councillor. I can tell you that Brampton Centre has quite a few of these marijuana grow operations. I don't like to think I'm the capital, but there sure were a lot of operations I learned about when I was a councillor in Brampton. I learned about it from real estate brokers and from homeowners.

I can tell you anecdotally of a story where the firefighters in my community went to a house, brought the building officials with them and were attempting to get into a home. The homeowner wasn't there, and the building officials weren't going to go in without the police and the firefighters present because there was talk of these locations being booby trapped. They eventually found a garage door opener and were attempting to open the door. They were standing back a fair distance, and as they pressed the button, a garage door on the other side of the street opened and they found another grow-op.

These are problems that are pervasive; they're expensive; they're dangerous; they're prevalent. I see this legislation as the first step in implementing a province-wide strategy. I personally am not prepared to not move forward, and I see this as a really great step. It's the beginning of trying to address what I know municipalities have been struggling with, that fire departments and building officials have been struggling with. I think we've all heard of the kinds of damage and wreckage that is brought to the owner or to a buyer who buys a home and finds out it's a marijuana grow operation. The walls have been taken out. The electricity has been changed. As a former hydro board member, I can recall many occasions when we determined that a home had extraordinary hydro uses being tapped from a hydro box in the vicinity of the home, but it wasn't clear how the hydro had gotten to the home. So this legislation will also amend the Electricity Act and give the power to distribution companies to give them the authority to cut power without notice. These are tremendously dangerous operations. The kind of power they draw has the ability to cause fires and explosions in neighbourhoods, essentially a lot of danger to neighbourhoods, because these primarily are located in residential areas. They're a really significant fire hazard.

I particularly think this is good legislation because of the danger, as I said, to firefighters and emergency workers. They're at significant risk. They're called out to these locations and have no idea what they're stepping into. The homes are unsafe. There have been changes to the structural inside of the house. Load-bearing walls have been changed. These people need the tools to help them simply do their job. I think this piece of legislation is giving them the tools to deal with this growing problem. It's being given legitimacy.

The organized groups that are building these operations within residential homes are particularly clever.

They know how to provide the odour and the mystique of having a home that's operating. They put tricycles outside the front of the house. They plant flowers. They turn lights on. They know how to make it look like a residential property, and we know it isn't.

We need to make some step forward. I believe this is that step forward. It's time to finally get serious about eliminating grow-ops. If we're going to get serious about this issue, we have to provide some bold, province-wide initiatives. I believe that if this bill is passed, it will be the first step in protecting all members of our community.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore spoke well about the bill. The problem with this bill is, grow-ops and producing marijuana in Ontario, or anywhere else, is easily identified. The technology is there. You can fly the area in summer and take infrared photographs. In fact, satellites can take infrared photographs over Ontario, and you can identify marijuana plants from a satellite. That technology has been around. We used to fly Ontario in the 1970s and identify tobacco fields that had nematode problems in them. You can tell the difference in the infrared colour between a tobacco field that is healthy and one that has nematode problems, and that same technology can tell a marijuana plant from 10,000 feet in the air. Today, you can do it with satellites. So you can identify marijuana production and you can identify a grow house, because in a grow house you keep the temperature quite a bit warmer than normal houses, probably 80 or 85 degrees. That temperature is what causes the fungus and the rot in the walls of a house and is why a house is seriously deteriorated after a grow operation has been there.

So the technology of identifying these places is there. All it takes is money. And this bill doesn't put any money at all into fighting the marijuana problem, production of an illegal drug. It just doesn't do the job. It's fluff. If you really want to do the job, if you are really serious about eliminating marijuana production in Ontario, in our communities, then you can do it with the technologies available. All you've got to do is put some real money into it.

Mr. Kormos: Here we are but six minutes before the day is over, and this question has to be put: Where are the 1,000 new police officers?

Garfield Dunlop was at the press conference too. There was fanfare, there were trumpets, there were drummers, there were pom-pom girls—young women with pom-poms—there was the whole shebang. It was like the Rose Festival Parade in Welland. The minister was announcing 1,000 new police officers, and here we are months later. How many—900, 800, 500, 600? One? None. Not one of the 1,000 new police officers.

Policing is expensive. Policing is labour-intensive. Police officers in this province and across this country are reasonably well paid, as they should be. If you want to see underpaid cops, go to places like old New Orleans,

Mexico City, or Bogotá, Colombia, and see what you get there in terms of policing. And police work, notwithstanding everything that is on television and in the movies, is for the largest part plodding, slow, meticulous and with incredible amounts of record-keeping. That's the nature of the beast. Municipal councils across Ontario are struggling with the budget process right now. One of the largest single demands in any given municipality is the cost of policing. This government promised 1,000 new police officers; this province hasn't seen one. That is the real crime here.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have to commend Minister Kwinter for bringing this piece of legislation forth. Just a few years ago, very recently, we didn't have this particular problem. And I have to say it again: I have to commend the government and Minister Kwinter for bringing this piece of legislation very expeditiously, introducing a comprehensive set of rules and strategies on behalf of the government to deal with this particular problem. And it is a problem; it is a very serious problem. So we are dealing with it. It would be nice to see a particular bill that would solve all the problems and have the opposition say, "Yes, we will support it. Let's go, one, two, three; let's pass it," but this will go a long way in addressing a very serious problem that mushroomed in the last few years. And yes, it will allow all those forces—the police, the local municipalities—to deal with the problem.

It's not so easy to identify a grow-op immediately. If that were the case, we would put them out of business overnight. The fact is that by the time we get to know some of these illegal operations, they may already be causing severe damage and harm to properties and to people's safety as well, not only to the immediate neighbours but to the entire community, let alone the millions in costs to the people of Ontario, because when we say "to the government," well, the people of Ontario are the government. We are trying to accomplish something extremely good: to send a message out there that

the government is here to protect and to eliminate these illegal businesses.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the previous government speakers. The last speaker talked about making the bill more complete, and that's probably a comment that I'd like to zero in on a little more.

I talked today to a number of police stakeholders in the audience and I've talked to some of the folks outside as well. One of the things I can tell you right now that the police stakeholders are looking forward to on this are committee hearings. They already have amendments they would like to present. One of the amendments is, I'll tell you right upfront, why just marijuana? Why not some of the other labs that they do for these different drugs that people take? That's one of the questions they'll be asking. That's why we have to have committee hearings.

Our caucus looks forward to that opportunity. If it's a good first step, and you're saying that today—you say it's not the be-all and end-all but it's a good first step—one thing we're going to have to do is have committee hearings to make this first step as complete as possible. It may not resolve everything, but at least let's correct a lot of the things that our stakeholders may be very interested in.

Of course, most of those stakeholders will be building inspectors, hydro inspectors, real estate agents, people who might have gone to the Green Tide Summit. Those kinds of people will also want to come back now, have a look at this piece of legislation, see what's happened with it and make amendments to it. They'll suggest amendments. We'll be more than happy, as the official opposition from our caucus, to work with any of the stakeholders who want to bring forward any kinds of amendments, and the reasons for the amendments, that they think would make this bill more complete, and a more complete good first step. So I appreciate that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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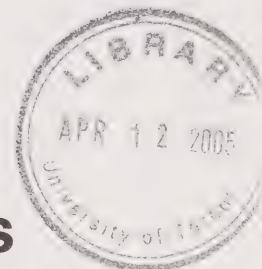
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Première session, 38^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)



Monday 4 April 2005

Lundi 4 avril 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 April 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 avril 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RIDEAU REGIONAL CENTRE

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I rise today to draw the attention of all members of this House to the plight that will be faced by the residents of Rideau Regional Centre and their families when that Smiths Falls facility is closed.

I have received petitions from the families of RRC residents, and each petition is accompanied by the story of an individual for whom RRC has been home. One constituent wrote that their son will be moved out of RRC in September 2006. This man has lived at RRC for 45 years. Another letter from a widower and a veteran says that his son will be moved out of the centre, which has been his home for 50 years.

Many of these elderly parents can't physically care for their adult children themselves, and they are afraid that the move from RRC will hurt their children both physically and emotionally. These people are frightened about what will happen to their severely disabled adult children, and they have petitioned this Legislature to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open.

I will be introducing petitions containing 6,500 signatures. I trust that members of this House, and particularly the Minister of Community and Social Services, will heed this cry for help from the friends and families of some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

BURNHAMTHORPE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise in the House today to acknowledge an outstanding school in my riding of Mississauga East.

In a recent Toronto Star article, Burnhamthorpe Public School was cited as a school that is "exceeding expectations" in standardized testing. Students at Burnhamthorpe are consistently scoring above the provincial average, with over 75% of students scoring in the top two levels of reading, writing and math.

Judy Fatum, the principal at Burnhamthorpe, cites the continued hard work of the school's 28 teachers and many volunteers as the key reason behind the school's success. She outlined that the focus at the school is not just on improving test scores. Instead, the school uses a

holistic approach to learning, encouraging students to participate in the arts and extracurricular activities and involving parents and the community in the learning process. It is believed that this approach to teaching, one that actively involves parents and focuses on well-rounded students, results in better learning and thus higher test scores.

It is the goal of this government to see outcomes like those of Burnhamthorpe Public School occur province-wide. I would like to congratulate the students, faculty, volunteers and parents at Burnhamthorpe Public School on their achievements. This government is working hard to ensure that schools have the resources they need so that those successes can become reality, not only at Burnhamthorpe Public School but across the province.

HYDRO ONE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to try to shed some light on a very dark issue facing Ontario taxpayers. The recently released public sector disclosure list revealed some very troubling facts about Ontario's provincial hydro sector. The total payroll in the hydro sector went from \$58.8 million in 1996 to \$743.2 million in 2004. That's an increase of more than 1,000%; yes, I said 1,000%. Minister of Energy, is that what you mean when you tell the people of Ontario and the consumers that they must pay the true cost of power? Does the true cost of power include these enormous salaries of Hydro's executives?

I, along with many Ontarians, am also concerned about the salary paid to Hydro One's president and CEO, Tom Parkinson. Tom Parkinson tops the Ontario salary disclosure earnings list with \$1 million. He received a 35% increase from the previous year. This is simply not justifiable. There are, of course, Mr. Parkinson's helicopter rides with the minister to his Muskoka cottage and the taxpayer-funded trip for his wife to accompany him on business conferences.

Minister, how can you raise electricity rates and hit the consumers directly in the pocketbook while at the same time allowing such expenses to take place at Hydro One? Your government preaches about a conservation culture. How about starting to conserve by taking control of the enormous salaries in Ontario's hydroelectric sector?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): People for Education did their annual report, and it revealed

some troubling news. I want to read and highlight some of those issues.

The report says: "Students whose first language is not English are struggling. Over a quarter of our schools with new immigrants did not have an English-as-a-second-language teacher.

"(2) Families are being asked to pay ever-higher student fees. The average activity fee, which covers athletic equipment, lab materials and student council operations, rose to \$30.60 this year, but some schools charge as much as \$180.

"Further, parents and students are still expected to raise funds for everything from classroom supplies to musical instruments."

On small schools, the report says, "As temporary grants for declining enrolment diminish and student-to-staff ratios drop below the levels set in the funding formula, school boards will be forced to reduce expenses by cutting staff for programs and/or closing small schools."

The Toronto Parent Network did their annual review this year. They said that 16% of the schools reported exposed asbestos in their schools, 33% of the schools reviewed reported signs of mould, 10% reported vermin and 90% required building maintenance.

This is from a government that worries about curriculum casualties. We know that the dropout rate hit 29% last year, higher than the previous year. Thank God we've got a government that is worried about curriculum casualties—all these problems and these failures due to the government, which really cares about kids. Things are not what they seem. Foul is fair and fair is foul.

LISTOWEL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I rise today to share with all members a good-news announcement made last week in my riding of Perth–Middlesex. On Friday I was pleased to announce, on behalf of the McGuinty government and the Honourable George Smitherman, our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, \$7.8 million in capital funding to help the Listowel Memorial Hospital continue moving forward with its redevelopment project.

1340

The new provincial funding will help the Listowel Memorial Hospital construct new areas for diagnostic imaging and surgical suites and redevelop its emergency and outpatient services departments. This redevelopment is the first phase of a 20-year plan to modernize the hospital. Most importantly, this support will provide the people of North Perth with enhanced access to quality health care for many years to come in state-of-the-art hospital facilities.

This announcement was part of a \$184-million contribution toward total capital project costs for specific hospitals across Ontario. No doubt our government is responding to the present and future needs of all Ontarians.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Margret Comack, the CEO of Listowel Memorial Hospital; Kerry Blaggrave, board chair; Dr. Barry Neable, chief of staff; Ed Hollinger, mayor of North Perth, and his council; and most importantly, those North Perth residents who depend on Listowel Memorial. Without their fundraising efforts and dedication, their capital project would never have come to fruition.

Finally, I want to publicly invite the Premier and the minister to visit North Perth on September 20, 2005, for the opening day of the 2005 International Plowing Match and to participate in the planned official sod-turning ceremony at the Listowel Memorial Hospital.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): Last week in this House, my good friend the Liberal member for Prince Edward–Hastings brought up the important issue of the fiscal imbalance. I want to join that member, and all members, in condemning the inaction of federal Liberal MPs from Ontario. Their job is to stand up and represent the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario. Ontario taxpayers strongly support the long-standing tradition of playing an important role in national unity by supporting other areas of the country, because that's what it means to be a Canadian.

The Liberal government of Paul Martin has some explaining to do. How can Immigration Minister Joe Volpe think it's acceptable to provide only \$800 of support for immigrants arriving at Toronto's Pearson airport, when immigrants arriving in Montreal's Trudeau airport get \$3,800 in federal support? What about health care, where Ontario receives the second-lowest amount per capita in Canada?

People in Ontario are asking where their tax dollars are going. Canadians are shocked to learn that they're going to support systemic corruption in the federal Liberal Party. Day after day, Justice Gomery is hearing the sordid details of how taxpayers have been patronized, taken for granted and really used in an irresponsible way.

While a publication ban has prevented Ontario taxpayers from learning some of the sordid details, let me tell you that the stench of the scandal can be smelled right across this country. Every dollar diverted to the corrupt federal Liberals and their greedy friends through the sponsorship program is a dollar stolen from Ontario hospitals. It has got to stop, and we're going to work on this side of the House to make sure it does.

NORTHERN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): The recently released Rae review supports what many institutions already know about the importance of post-secondary education and the funding inequities that have existed in our colleges and universities for far too long.

Nowhere are these funding inequities more severe than in our northern colleges and universities.

In spite of this challenge, northern institutions like Confederation College and Lakehead University continue to play a pivotal role in the education of our young adults. Lindsay Farrell is a graduate student at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, enrolled in the master of biology program. Our university's ability to offer this graduate program has provided an opportunity to a female aboriginal student that she possibly would not have had, had this program not existed in Thunder Bay.

We need to ensure that the new government funding for graduate growth and research is shared equitably across all Ontario universities so that young people like Lindsay Farrell can be supported, educated and employed in Thunder Bay if our northern communities are to grow and flourish. We need to do all we can to retain students like Lindsay, who, by the way, was one of a small number of students in Canada to receive an NSERC post-graduate scholarship award in the hard sciences.

In the north, we need to be innovative. Confederation College serves 34 municipalities and 67 First Nations communities. They are working on an innovative community-based project to deliver a four-year bachelor of science nursing degree program in four rural towns in northwestern Ontario, a program that, if successful, would be the first of its kind for the bachelor of science in Canada.

This is the kind of innovation and equity that we must strive for in post-secondary education, and northern institutions like Lakehead and Confederation College are leading the way.

AGNES JACKS

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): This weekend, the residents of North Bay and area lost a great member of our community. Agnes Jacks was a very special lady. She was known as Canada's ringette ambassador. Her husband, Sam Jacks, invented the sport in 1963 in North Bay when he was the city's recreation director.

Together, the two promoted ringette and youth participation in sports in northern Ontario and around the world.

Sam and Agnes had three sons; the girls who played ringette in our community became their daughters. Sam and Agnes believed that there was little for girls to do in winter months, especially for those who couldn't afford figure skating or who weren't inclined. Using broken hockey sticks and broomball handles and various types of rings, they developed ringette.

Growing up in North Bay, I always heard the ringette scores, together with the hockey scores, on the radio in the morning. I thought everyone around the world played ringette. And thanks to Agnes and her dedication to the sport, they do. She travelled to Sweden, Finland, Russia and France to promote the game. In Ontario alone, over 13,000 players enjoy ringette. There are 80 local associations. It is played in every province and territory in Canada, and across the country, over 50,000 people

participate as players, coaches, officials and volunteers. That is quite a legacy.

Just two weeks ago, Agnes was in Pembroke for the Ontario provincial championships. She attended in her wheelchair, where she officiated over the opening ceremonies and was cheered by thousands. In 2002, for all her good work, Agnes was awarded the Order of Canada.

Agnes died over the weekend. She was 81 years old. She leaves behind three sons, her 11 grandchildren and a legion of fans, friends and girls whose lives she changed because of her encouragement, her passion and her enthusiasm.

BUCHENWALD

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): This weekend marks the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald, one of the Nazi concentration camps where many atrocities took place during the Second World War. This coming weekend, men and women from around the globe are reuniting at Buchenwald to thank their liberators, to come to terms with what they suffered and to pay homage to those who didn't survive. We must remember them.

While we are all familiar with the horrors of the Holocaust, many of us are unaware of the direct connection the Buchenwald camp has to Ontario. One hundred and sixty-eight airman from the Allied forces were sent there, through unfortunate circumstances, instead of to POW camps. Among them were 11 Ontarians, one being Edward Carter-Edwards, father of one of my constituents, Dennis Carter-Edwards. Edward and all these airmen witnessed the senseless slaughter of those the Nazis considered undesirable. They were forced to live in unimaginable squalor, doing slave labour under the threat of execution.

Let no one deny that these events happened; we have living citizens from our province who witnessed them and bear the scars of them. Let none of us forget what happened, and do our part to be aware of the atrocities happening today.

Let us also follow the example of men like Ed Carter-Edwards and let go of resentments from the past. Despite what he endured, he bears no malice to the German people. He taught his son not to hold children accountable for the sins of their fathers. Now, Edward's grandson speaks German and has many friends in that country.

What these 11 Ontarians endured, none of us here can imagine. It is our duty as Ontarians to remember what they sacrificed and what they witnessed and, above all, to set an example for the world, showing that it is possible to let go of the past, to embrace one's enemies and, united, to build toward the future.

WATER SUPPLY

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I have a very important announcement. As members may have heard, there has been a water main break in the vicinity of

Queen's Park. All occupants of the precinct have been advised not to drink the tap water until further notice.

I want to assure all members and staff that the water in your glasses today is bottled, with no ice.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery the Michigan state legislators participating in the legislative exchange program of the Midwestern Legislative Conference. They are Senator Patricia Birkholz and Representative Dan Acciavatti. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 4, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Jackson, Cameron	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sterling, Norman W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Tory, John
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Yakabuski, John
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John	
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martel, Shelley
Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AMBER ALERT ON LOTTERY TERMINALS

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I have some important news about protecting safety in Ontario.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Thank you. Does this mean you'll be asking me more questions in the House?

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I'll ask you just as many as you ask me.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: OK.

This morning, our government announced that the province's 9,000 lottery terminals will join Ontario's Amber Alert child abduction warning system. When a child is abducted and the OPP issues an Amber Alert, thousands more Ontarians will be aware and vigilant.

As the minister responsible for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., I am very proud that Ontario is the first Canadian province to harness the power of its lottery network in this way. This initiative has the potential to save a child's life.

Let me explain to the House why our lottery retailers are such strong partners to the police and to other members of Ontario's Amber Alert program: If you want to get vital information to the masses, and do it fast, lottery terminal screens are a great tool. These screens are in places we go to every day: convenience stores, gas stations, mall kiosks, supermarkets and newsstands. Lottery tickets are sold in some of Ontario's busiest places. It doesn't matter whether you play lotteries or not, these screens are part of our everyday lives. If a child has been taken, there will be 9,000 more chances that Ontarians are going to know about it.

1400

We all know that when a child has been abducted, every second counts. Ontario's lottery network will get Amber Alerts out there, and fast. That means that when the alert is called, marketing messages normally seen on the screens will be replaced by vital Amber Alert information.

Mr. Speaker, imagine that you or any member of this House is out and about on the day an Amber Alert breaks. The information you see on a lottery screen may trigger a memory, something you saw—a vehicle, a person, a child—something that didn't look quite right. It may be the key piece of information that helps the police find a child before it's too late, and there's nothing more important than that.

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'm happy to report to the House that tomorrow morning, Ontario will have a new and powerful tool to help find an abducted child. Earlier today, the Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and I launched an important addition to the Amber Alert system in Ontario. At 6 o'clock tomorrow morning, all of Ontario's 9,000 retail lottery terminals will have the capability to alert the public through the Amber Alert system that a child has been abducted.

Amber Alert is a warning system that quickly notifies the public of a missing or abducted child under 18 years of age who is in imminent danger. There must also be enough descriptive information about the child, the abductor and/or the suspect's vehicle to make police believe that an immediate alert will help locate the child.

Amber Alert is a partnership among the Ontario government, police services and the media. The Amber Alert system currently uses the Ministry of Transportation's electronic highway signs to notify the public with time-critical information about an abducted child, his or her abductor, and/or suspect vehicles. In addition, radio and television stations interrupt regular programming to broadcast information. The addition of the lottery terminals to Ontario's Amber Alert system is the largest expansion to the program since it was launched two years ago, and it will improve the safety of Ontario communities.

When a child is abducted, every minute counts. Police believe that the first two to five hours of an abduction are the most crucial. It's absolutely vital to the search and the investigation that critical information about the missing child be relayed to the public as quickly as possible. The public can play a significant role in the safe rescue of an abducted child.

There have been three Amber Alerts issued in Ontario since it was launched. The addition of 9,000 lottery terminals is important to the Amber Alert network. It's also a symbol of the desire of people and organizations in our community to be involved and to make their own contributions to stronger, safer communities.

This is just the latest initiative by the McGuinty government to help protect our children from predators. We have taken measures to educate them about the dangers of Internet luring and to combat child pornography through innovative and interactive software called CYBERCOPS to educate grades 7 and 8 children on the dangers of the Internet. We've earmarked up to \$5 million in funding to support a strategy being developed by the OPP and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to combat luring and child pornography on the Internet. What's more, last year we announced an additional \$1 million for the OPP's child porn section, called Project P, that will provide more staff, help acquire technology and specialized training, and develop public education materials. Project P is a leader in the fight against the growing problem of child sexual exploitation.

We are also supporting a two-year pilot project with the Toronto Police Service to keep closer tabs on con-

victed sex offenders. The \$700,000 infusion from the victims' justice fund will allow police in Toronto to dedicate more officers to track convicted sex offenders and ensure that addresses supplied by about 1,000 convicted sex offenders are correct. We want to ensure that all Ontario communities and police services have the resources they need to protect our children.

The addition of 9,000 retail lottery terminals to the Amber Alert system is just the latest tool we are giving communities and the police to improve their ongoing efforts to protect our children.

FARM RETAIL SALES TAX EXEMPTION

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food):

Last Tuesday, I was pleased to announce that the McGuinty government will provide \$79 million in new funding under the market revenue program, on top of the \$88 million delivered in March to help our hard-pressed grains and oilseeds farmers with the spring planting.

This past Friday, I was pleased to share with them even more good news for Ontario farmers, news that will help simplify paperwork for them and the businesses that they support. Thanks to the positive collaboration with my ministry, the Ministry of Finance and farm organizations, Ontario producers will now be able to use their general farm organization identification cards to receive retail sales tax exemptions when buying equipment and supplies for their businesses.

This will give Ontario farmers greater freedom of movement and choice when shopping for goods, services and insurance for their business, since the card they already carry in their pockets will be proof of their exemption status. It's a good example of how our government is working closely with farm organizations and responding to their needs. Any farmer who belongs to a general farm organization in Ontario will be eligible to obtain the retail tax exemption at the point of purchase simply by showing their current farm organization ID cards.

Those who are not members will still be able to receive the exemption, either by using a purchase exemption certificate or by applying to the Ministry of Finance for a refund.

I want to thank my colleague Minister Greg Sorbara and his staff for working with our ministry and stakeholders to streamline the process to effect this most important change.

The McGuinty government recognizes that primary producers feed the province on a number of levels. They work hard to produce agri-food products that are second to none and have built Ontario's reputation as a reliable, safe and high-quality supplier. They also support a wide variety of businesses whose bottom lines depend on the success of a farmer's operation. These farms and businesses provide an important economic lifeline to our rural communities, and our government is there to help because when our farm families prosper and our rural

communities prosper, the economy of Ontario prospers as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Responses?

AMBER ALERT ON LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased today to respond to the statements by Ministers Kwinter and Cordiano. To begin with, we in the Progressive Conservative caucus support any initiative that would help protect the children in Ontario, and I thank the minister for that announcement.

As you're probably aware, this is an expansion of the program introduced by the Honourable Bob Runciman on June 23, 2003. Mr. Runciman announced this in conjunction with the province of Quebec at that time, and it's ironic that Minister Runciman was actually in Union Station this morning on his way back from his riding and many people thought he was there to make the announcement once again.

The minister has mentioned on a couple of occasions a number of announcements they've made to help children: \$700,000 in the victims' justice fund, another \$5 million in the victims' justice fund. You will probably remember that they were embarrassed into announcing the first \$700,000 so that the Toronto Police Services could actually dedicate officers to that particular program.

I was also hoping this morning—when I saw that the two ministers were actually making an announcement—that it was an announcement that would see the Windsor casino project cancelled, that \$400 million that was going to go to complimentary rooms for American visitors. I hoped that money would be put toward the additional 1,000 police officers this government promised in their pre-election platform.

Again, I do want to say on behalf of our caucus that anything that will help the children in Ontario, anything that will help safety in our communities and all the different organizations across this great province, we need to invest in. I heard both of the ministers speak. I'm not sure what this is actually costing. I don't know if there is even a cost to it, or if it's something they've downloaded to another body. But at the same time, if it protects children, we on this side of the House are supportive of it.

I just want to add one other thing: As this is coming from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, I was wondering if there's any way that the identification or the Amber Alert program could be expanded to our racetracks—I mean the terminals at the racetracks where you actually see the betting and that. Could we see the Amber Alert program put there? That's a suggestion I would like to make.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I want to thank the minister once again, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to stand and speak.

1410

FARM RETAIL SALES TAX EXEMPTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I am greatly disappointed, as I speak to the minister's announcement. According to StatsCan, farmers in Ontario are facing a \$229-million collective loss this year, compared to a \$1-billion net gain for farmers in the rest of Canada. That's a loss six times as large as it was last year, and the minister's answer is that farmers can now go out and make purchases with the money they haven't got, and instead of signing for them, they can use a card they've had for years and years as members of a farm organization and have their taxes exempted. Isn't that wonderful? Minister, they can't afford to buy anything, so it's not a matter of how they get their taxes back. That's the problem.

The other part of the announcement—again, this is the fourth time the minister has made this announcement—is the \$79 million going to the grain and oilseed industry, a short-term, band-aid solution. The minister knows full well that that accommodates paying 40% of the farmers' entitlement in this program. The farmers were not cheering when this announcement was made; they were wondering where the other 60% was going to come from. It seems that the McGuinty government was quick in cancelling provincial support for farmers but seems very, very slow in putting any program back.

The minister also knows that this is a short-term solution. This is for last year's crop, to help farmers pay last year's bills. Unless there is some type of program put in place for these farmers, there will not be any money available for them at the banks because they cannot show a cash flow from planting the crops this spring to getting enough back in the fall to pay for planting those crops. The minister needs to move forward and put that program in place.

I was going to say that maybe it's because the government found itself short of money, but I noticed, as my colleague mentioned, that the \$400 million is still there for building a new casino hotel. But there is only \$79 million available for our farmers.

I would just like to point out the last comment that the minister made: "These farms and businesses provide an important economic lifeline for our rural communities." I wholeheartedly agree with that. Our government is there to help, but obviously the help is nowhere near sufficient. If our farm families prosper, Ontario prospers. I want to tell you that this is the worst situation our farmers and rural Ontarians have ever seen themselves in. If that's what's happening to our farmers, that's what's happening in rural Ontario, and that's something the minister should deal with.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to respond to another non-announcement from the Minister of Agriculture. Every day the problems which farmers face grow more serious in the province, and every day, virtually, the McGuinty government makes

another announcement which dabbles at the edges, which reannounces something that was announced months ago and does nothing to address the serious farm crisis. While Ontario's agricultural communities remain in crisis, we hear of yet another band-aid solution. Farmers need to see a cost-of-production formula. They need to see a plan. Ontario farmers continue to compete against farmers in the United States and Quebec, who have a cost-of-production formula.

Now, what is interesting is that while the minister continues to make these reactive, band-aid, short-term announcements and the farm crisis gets worse, every once in a while, I look at what Premier McGuinty had to say during the election, because then it seemed as if he had a plan. In fact, he couldn't talk about it enough. What did he say? He said, before the election, that this was a government that was going to double corn production. He said that their ethanol strategy would use Ontario corn and that Ontario corn producers would be in an excellent position. What has happened? The ethanol plants aren't using Ontario corn; the ethanol plants are bringing in corn from Ohio and Michigan—subsidized corn. So I wonder what happened to that plan.

I know that just recently the minister was out there talking with some farmers, and he said the government was going to ensure that we were using their corn to produce Ontario ethanol. I say to the minister, where is your announcement? You have been telling farmers this. Where is your plan? Where is your announcement to deal with the longer-term issues, the longer-term plan that farmers need to see?

Before the election, the Premier and his minister talked a lot about a biodiesel strategy and promoted that as a plan for farmers. We're now getting into the end of your second year as government and we still haven't seen a biodiesel strategy. As I say, we hear announcements about every four or five weeks that amount to a band-aid, but all that you promised before the election, you somehow now try to avoid. You try to avoid talking about it. You try to avoid doing anything about it. You try to avoid even acknowledging that you said it.

I just want to raise some other things. We know that Ontario farmers are being hammered by the BSE crisis; they are being hammered by low commodity prices. We know how other jurisdictions have responded. We know that Quebec actually has a cost-of-production formula. We know that in the United States, whether they call it a cost-of-production formula or not, it amounts to a cost-of-production formula. We know that in other provinces they are implementing aspects of a cost-of-production formula. Where is the cost-of-production formula in Ontario?

This is what I think farmers find so peculiar about this government. Before the election, Premier McGuinty and many of his ministers talked as if they had a plan for agriculture. They talked about a competitive industry for the long term, a plan to ensure a competitive industry for the long term. What is lacking now is any plan, any strategy. That's why farmers are becoming particularly

cynical about a Minister of Agriculture who comes here every week and reannounces what he announced last week or reannounces what he announced two weeks ago, and yet in terms of farmers who are losing their livelihood, losing the family farm, losing virtually everything they've invested their lives in, this government has no plan, no strategy, no idea where it's going. That simply cannot continue to be the case in Ontario.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

LE PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in memory of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I rise to pay tribute to the remarkable life of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, whose death Saturday in Rome has elicited world-wide grief, mourning and remembrance.

Over the weekend, Ontarians joined the world in honouring a man who touched so many people and whose influence was felt far beyond the Roman Catholic Church. All of us, spiritual and non-spiritual, were able to recognize that a great voice has been silenced: a voice that spoke out and was heard by millions around the world, a voice in the name of peace and humanitarianism.

As the world reflects on the legacy of John Paul II, it recalls a man whose primary message was the essential dignity of the individual.

Il croyait que chacun de nous était unique, que nous étions dotés de dons et de talents spéciaux, et que tous les humains avaient fondamentalement droit à la justice, à la liberté et aux droits de la personne.

He believed that each of us is unique, that we are each endowed with special gifts and talents and that all humans are entitled to justice, freedom and basic human rights.

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This is all the more impressive when one realizes that the Pope's bedrock beliefs were formed in an era when his Polish homeland was in the grip of totalitarian regimes that practised exactly the opposite. But then adversity, and not good fortune, has always been a better guide to character, particularly in our leaders, and John Paul emerged from the turmoil of 20th-century Poland a true leader.

As Ontarians, we're thankful for the two occasions that His Holiness visited us here. In 1984, he instantly connected with our province's youth, native peoples and the culture of our bustling cities. When he returned in 2002 for World Youth Day, he told a huge crowd of young people that the world needed them, that it needed their hope, their joy and their talents: a simple message

and a powerful one. It's not something that our young people hear every day.

In his later years, His Holiness was exemplary in his perseverance and commitment to his faith. His leadership and wisdom seemed only more authentic when combined with increasing physical frailty. He inspired those among us of a certain age who daily live with bright minds but failing bodies. His message throughout was consistent: There is dignity in all human endeavour, no matter the age or physical ability.

On behalf of the government of Ontario, I express our deepest sympathies to Catholics in Ontario who have lost their spiritual father, and I join with the world community in mourning an exceptional humanitarian and a champion of world peace.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I want to pay tribute, on behalf of our caucus and on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, to the life of Pope John Paul II on the occasion of his passing. We are all deeply saddened by the loss of this extraordinary Pope, John Paul II. While he will be missed by many, our thoughts in particular go out to the members of the Roman Catholic faith here in Ontario and around the world.

While the world mourns its loss, our minds cannot help but move away from sadness and to the great joy and blessings that His Holiness left behind during what was truly a remarkable life. He will be remembered as one of the great figures of our time, helping to reshape the 20th century in a new light: the light of peace and justice and of freedom.

To the millions of people trapped behind the Iron Curtain in his native Poland, he will be remembered as a liberator, as the light of hope that gave them the courage to step out of the darkness into solidarity and eventually into freedom. I'm sure the sadness we all feel is magnified many times over in Poland itself and here in our own Polish community in Ontario. We extend our sympathies as well to our friends in the Polish community who share citizenship with us but also share Polish roots with John Paul II.

To the millions more born into communism and slavery and despair throughout other parts of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, people who can now experience some of the freedom that we often take for granted, he will be remembered as among those who helped tip the world's balance away from tyranny.

Over the past 26 years, the world has been shaped by his advocacy for human rights and by his dignity. He touched many lives in many countries, gaining the well-earned title of the most travelled Pope in history. He came to Canada three times as Pope: in 1984 and 1987, and of course most recently, as the Premier mentioned, in 2002. Personally, I remember the 1984 visit the best, perhaps because it was the first and certainly because I had the opportunity of meeting him. Perhaps Mr. Chrétien put it best when he said, "When you were talking with him, you knew you were talking to a very exceptional person."

The 1984 tour was remarkable not only because of its 12-day duration, but also because it touched so many parts of our collective identity. He spent time with our First Nations then, as in 1987, and he reminded us in 1984 that it was "truly the hour for Canadians to heal all divisions that have developed over the centuries between the original peoples and the newcomers to this continent." This was typical of the kind of bridge-building that he tried to do, bridge-building of his own as head of the Roman Catholic Church and bridge-building that went well beyond that role.

Il y a beaucoup de travail à faire ici, et il reste avec nous et son successeur à continuer les efforts de rapprochement et à commencer ce qu'on doit commencer.

Much work remains to be done here, and it will fall to us and to his eventual successor to finish bridges partially built and to embark upon those not yet started.

I saw the 2002 visit more through television, and I was struck, as we all were, by the extraordinary inspiration he provided to the hundreds of thousands of young people in an age when we read of a supposed decline in spiritual commitment. During that tour, he described Canada as a "free, democratic and caring society, one that is recognized throughout the world as a champion of human rights and human dignity."

I would suggest that the Pope was not only showing us that he understood those foundation values that are so important to our sense of nationhood and our sense of Canadian citizenship, but also reminding us that there is no room for complacency in maintaining what he called "an extraordinarily rich humanism" that has evolved here in Canada.

The Holy Father touched the lives of virtually all Ontarians in many different ways, and that is why we honour him in this chamber today.

This champion of peace and of freedom and of justice and of dignity may have left us, but the example of his life will live on, inspiring us to do better, to stand by our principles and to do whatever we can to make the world a better place for all of its inhabitants.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of Ontario New Democrats, I want to express our sympathy to those who grieve the death of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. Pope John Paul II touched many people by his life, by his work and by his example.

He was the first Pope to visit Canada, not once but three times. His visits were met with huge crowds in 1984, in 1987 and most recently in 2002, when he visited Toronto for World Youth Day. He holds a very special place in the hearts of the Polish-Canadian community, who hold a very deep affection for their countryman.

Pope John Paul was an inspiration to millions around the world. From his earliest days in Poland he worked for peace. In the early 1980s he stood shoulder to shoulder with shipyard workers in the Solidarity struggle. His support for the Solidarity movement has been credited with beginning the process of the democratization of eastern Europe and precipitating the end of the Cold War. He was a vocal opponent of the war in Iraq. He advo-

cated peaceful resolution to conflict above all else. He worked to forge new relationships with the world's other faith communities. When he came to Canada, he said he came to rebuild a bridge with Canada's First Nations. He was the first Pope to visit a mosque. His apology to the Jewish community over past misdeeds of the Roman Catholic church was an important step forward.

Today, as people around the world grieve, we reflect on the legacy of John Paul II. The legacy has many aspects. Most are positive; others are more controversial. The most enduring aspects of John Paul's legacies are his strength and his humanity: the strength he showed through eight decades of life—a life, in many cases, of hardship—in one of the longest papal reigns ever; and a sense of humanity that could bring the faithful to tears with a smile, a gesture or sometimes just a touch.

We will remember Pope John Paul II with admiration and respect—admiration and respect for someone who has made an incredible contribution.

To all of those who grieve, on behalf of New Democrats, know that are you in our thoughts and our prayers.

The Speaker: Would all members and guests please rise to observe a moment of silence in respect to the passing of Pope John Paul II.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): On Tuesday, March 29, 2005, the member for Simcoe North, Mr. Dunlop, rose on a question of privilege concerning the circumstances surrounding a public announcement by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Mr. Kwinter, on March 22, 2005. According to the member, only government members received advance notice of the announcement, and the ministry ignored or rebuffed opposition requests for information about the announcement, contrary to the custom and tradition of the House.

I have had an opportunity to review the Hansard for that day, together with our precedents and the relevant parliamentary authorities. Our precedents indicate that although the Speaker has a duty to preserve members' rights to seek information under the standing orders, there are limits to the Speaker's authority. For example, on October 9, 1997, on page 801 of the Journals of that day, Speaker Stockwell made the following remarks concerning ministry financial information that was released to opposition members only after it had been released to government members and the media:

"I appreciate that the member would have preferred that all members could have received the information at the same time. However, the Speaker cannot require the government to release such information—or to release it at a certain time. There is nothing in our rules or our practice that would permit the Speaker to control the dissemination of that kind of information. It is clear from any number of previous Speakers' rulings that these

types of situations do not amount to a prima facie case of privilege."

I agree with this review, and find therefore that a prima facie case of privilege has not been established. In closing, I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for raising this concern.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. In your first budget, presented last May, you laid out five areas where your government would reduce wait times over the term of your government. Of course, to measure if wait times are falling, you have to know what they are to begin with. As of today, since I'm sure you're managing these things carefully, can you tell us what the average wait time is for patients who are waiting to receive an MRI, a hip or knee replacement, radiation therapy, cataract surgery or cardiac care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this issue. We are, in fact, for the first time ever in the history of the province, collecting baseline data in those areas. But specifically, when it comes to hip and knee replacement surgeries, cancer surgeries, cardiac procedures and cataract procedures, we're putting in place a Web site that will ultimately enable all Ontarians to have access to this information for the very first time.

Mr. Tory: The people of Ontario want to be able to measure actual results now. Last fall, your own wait times expert, Dr. Alan Hudson, said that you won't be able to measure wait times until the end of next year, 2006, at the earliest. Yet, if we look at Cancer Care Ontario's Web site and the Ontario Joint Replacement Registry, we see that somehow they are able to measure some wait times. Why can't patients in Ontario have access to your wait times information, as you promised, for another year and a half? Why can Cancer Care Ontario do it and not your government?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: For eight years, under the Conservative government, they did not measure such things. So it takes a bit of time. I'm glad that they are eagerly awaiting this information in public policy in the province of Ontario, and we're proud to be putting it in place.

I can tell you about some of the advances that we have already made: We paid for 1,680 more hip and knee replacement surgeries this year than last, 1,700 more cancer surgeries, 7,800 more cardiac procedures and 2,000 more cataract procedures. So, yes, we've increased the number of procedures, and we continue to work to put in place for the first time ever in the province of Ontario a wait-list strategy, complete with a Web site which will give access to all Ontarians when it comes to knowing exactly where we stand on these kind of things.

Mr. Tory: I'll tell you, the real innovation around here would be if we got some actual results.

Today, the Canadian Medical Association has released an interim report calling for governments to institute benchmark wait times for the very same five areas that your government has referenced. According to Cancer Care Ontario, patients wait an average of 9.9 weeks at the Grand River Regional Cancer Centre for radiation therapy for the treatment of breast cancer. They wait 8.6 weeks in Hamilton and 10.8 weeks at Sunnybrook hospital in Toronto. The Canadian Medical Association says patients should wait no more than 10 days.

Premier, can you guarantee that by the end of your mandate, patients will not wait longer than the 10 days for treatment for breast cancer that the Canadian Medical Association recommends: yes or no?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We look forward to moving down this path, which no government in the history of this province has ever taken before. We appreciate the good advice and recommendations from the Canadian Medical Association.

Let me tell you once again, Speaker—this may not be what they want to hear—that we are actually making progress in this area: 1,680 more hip and knee replacement surgeries this past year, 1,700 more cancer surgeries, 7,800 more cardiac procedures and 2,000 more cataract procedures. To put it another way, we have taken 1,680 people who were on the hip and knee replacement list off that list, and 1,700 people on the cancer surgery list off that list. We've taken 7,800 patients waiting for cardiac procedures off that list and have given them those procedures. And when it comes to cataract procedures, we've taken 2,000 people off that list and given them the procedures.

We are moving forward. Shortly, as I say, we'll have in place a complete Web site which will enable Ontarians for the first time ever to have full access to this very kind of information.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr. Tory: I say to the Premier that you can't possibly know whether you're moving forward if you don't have the basic information you need to manage the health care system in this province.

The Canadian Medical Association states that cataract surgery should be completed within four months. Today's *Globe and Mail* quotes Arlene Silver of Toronto, who has had to wait for 13 months just to find out when she will be scheduled for surgery. It will take her a total of three years to have both eyes completed in terms of the surgery.

Premier, will you guarantee that by the end of your mandate you will abide by the Canadian Medical Association guidelines of four months for cataract surgery: yes or no?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I really wish that we had started from a stronger beginning position, but we followed eight years of Tory legacy when it comes to health care. You'll recall that during that period of time we went from 63 underserved communities to 142. This is a former

government that spent \$400 million to fire thousands of nurses and that compared them to Hula Hoop workers. They cut more than half a billion dollars over two years from our hospitals. That was the starting point, the crumbling foundation, on which we were left to build.

We've been investing significantly more. As I say, for the first time ever in the history of this province, we have decided to put in place a wait-list strategy. We'll have a specific Web site that will give all Ontarians access to that information. It takes a bit of time to collect that information.

One thing we will not do is take \$2.4 billion out of the system, as the honourable member opposite is determined to do.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I say to the Premier, apparently his first objective was to fire an additional 757 nurses, so he feels the previous government didn't do enough in this area.

Premier, I've asked a number of times for you to tell us how you would reduce wait times. I asked you on February 21. We asked you on December 14 and we asked you on November 22 what wait times currently are and when patients in Ontario can expect to see some meaningful reductions.

Today's report by the Canadian Medical Association lays out benchmark times suggested by the experts on the front lines: the doctors themselves. Do you think the Canadian Medical Association benchmarks are reasonable: yes or no?

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Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, it's interesting to learn of their new-found infatuation with wait times. We ask ourselves here on this side of the House, where was that interest, let alone infatuation, with reducing wait times during their eight years as a government? It simply was not an issue. It was not even worthy of consideration. They were devoted then to taking money out of the system, to firing nurses, to shutting down hospitals and to waging war with everyone in the public service, including those who find themselves in the health care system.

Now we have a leader of the party who is committed and absolutely determined to take \$2.4 billion out of our health care system. So I ask him and the member opposite, what do you honestly think that is going to do when it comes to wait times in Ontario? I can tell you it is going to drive wait times up. We're going in one direction to get wait times down; they want to go in the other.

Mr. Baird: I say to the Premier that if he visited the Queensway Carleton Hospital, if he visited the Ottawa Hospital, they'll say that our former government is the one that was able to deliver for those hospitals, unlike the Liberal representation from members opposite since he became Premier. Your own wait times expert, Dr. Alan Hudson, said last year that it would be till the end—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm trying to hear the member from Nepean-Carleton, and the government side seems to be shouting. The member from Nepean-Carleton.

Mr. Baird: Your own wait times expert, Dr. Alan Hudson, said last year that you're only going to begin to be able to measure wait times at the end of 2006.

Premier, it was your promise to reduce wait times in five areas. Now you're quickly approaching the halfway point of your mandate and apparently you have no idea how long the lines are in the first place—18 long months and still you have no answers. When will you report to this House and to patients right across the province what the current wait times are so they can measure your performance in this important priority for their families?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I ask the good people of Ontario to compare and contrast. During their eight years, we went from 63 underserved communities to 142. They spent \$400 million to fire thousands of nurses. They cut more than half a billion dollars over two years from our hospitals. They closed 28 hospitals. They closed 5,000 beds. We've invested more than \$3 billion more in health care. We've put in place funding to hire 3,000 more nurses. We have put in place the funding to benefit 21,000 more patients who need home care in their homes. We have for the first time ever committed ourselves to reducing wait times in important areas like cataract, cancer, cardiac, hips and knees and MRIs and CTs. No government ever before has decided to take that on. Is it easy? Absolutely not. But I can tell you—compare and contrast—we are for getting wait times down; they want to take \$2.4 billion out of health care in Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. During the election, you promised to extend IBI autism treatment to children over age six. In fact, I can quote you. You said, "I ... believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory." And you said, "The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." But after the election, you broke your promise and denied autism treatment to children over six. Now the Superior Court of Ontario has ruled that your denial of autism treatment violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Premier, those children and their parents are here today. You promised autism treatment, IBI treatment. How can you now justify dragging them back through the court system again while you appeal a court decision that says you're violating the Charter of Rights and breaking your own promise? Tell them how you justify that.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): We welcome guests to Parliament, but we ask you not to participate by clapping or applauding in any way.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Attorney General, Speaker.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for

democratic renewal): I think it's fair to say that every single member of provincial Parliament in this House has enormous concern and sympathy for the challenges facing autistic children and their families. We believe the government of the day needs to have the flexibility to provide the kind of programs that will permit improvement in terms of the assistance to autistic children. We feel that it is for the government in the Legislature to do that, and therefore we will continue to provide those improvements, provide that assistance. We will do that through the Legislature, we will do that through government, and we will be appealing the decision on that basis.

Mr. Hampton: Apparently, the Premier finds it is easier to make promises than to keep those promises.

I just want to recite some of what Madam Justice Kiteley had to say. It's a very lengthy decision. It considered months of evidence; it looked at all of the scientific evidence. This is what she has to say:

First of all, she says you are violating the constitutional rights of these autistic children. What's more, she says you are violating their "human dignity" by denying them the treatment they need to cope and to thrive as individual human beings. In her decision, she calls your discrimination against autistic children "heart-breaking," and says that your failure to live up to your responsibilities and your promise, Premier, to provide the help that they need, the help for these most vulnerable of Ontarians, "undermines the integrity" of your government.

Premier, you found it easy to make promises before the election. Tell these children, these vulnerable children whose rights you are violating, why you're going to drag them through the court again and defend your violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: This government feels that we are taking the approach that is in the best interests of all autistic children across the province of Ontario. The Supreme Court of Canada held just last November that governments need the flexibility to design programs that are in the best interests of autistic children and that the courts are not in a position to do that.

The question is, do we have courts determine a specific treatment, or do we have governments undertake programs that include a reduction of waiting lists for assessment by more than 70%, that see 25% more children receiving IBI therapy under this government and that see a new program for all school-aged autistic children? This government has put in place those programs. We feel that is the best approach. That's why we believe that the law of Canada has been ruled upon by the Supreme Court of Canada, and as a result we intend to appeal the decision.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government can make up all kinds of excuses now. Madam Justice Kiteley looked at the situation here in Ontario, she looked at the situation under your government and she is very critical of everything you've tried to trot out as an excuse today.

She ruled that you are denying autistic children the treatment that they deserve after age six for no scientific

reason. She said you're discriminating against these children based on their age, with absolutely no justification for that discrimination, again contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. She said, "I find that the age cut-off reflects and reinforces the stereotype that children with autism over age six are virtually unredeemable," and that "To deny the plaintiff children the opportunity to have [treatment] after the age of five is to stereotype them, to prejudice them, and to create a disadvantage for them."

I say again to the Premier, who made the promise, tell these children now why you intend to defy this court, defy this well-considered judgment by this judge and defy your own promise to these children.

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Hon. Mr. Bryant: Madam Justice Kiteley also held that the preschool program for autistic children in Ontario today is exemplary. Over a thousand children were on a waiting list for assessment a year ago. We've reduced that waiting list for assessment by more than 70%. We've increased the number of children in Ontario who are receiving IBI treatment by 25%. We have programs that we are putting forward in schools that had never existed before in Ontario. We feel that that is in the best interests of all autistic children in Ontario and their families. We feel that it is a dramatic improvement over the past government's performance, and we will continue in the courts to defend our ability to deliver those kinds of programs so that we can provide more assistance to autistic children in the province.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: The Attorney General is trying to deflect this whole issue, trying to argue that it's something about five-year-olds. No, Premier, this is about your promise. You said that ending IBI autism treatment at age six was discrimination. You said it was wrong; you said it was unfair. This is what Madam Justice Kiteley says: "Without IBI treatment, the plaintive children are deprived of the skills they need for full membership in the human community. That child's isolation from society and lack of skills mean that she or he cannot participate in society and cannot exercise the rights and freedoms to which all Canadians are entitled." You see, Madam Justice Kiteley agrees with you: It's discrimination, it's not justified, it's wrong. All these children want, and all Madam Justice Kiteley wants, is for you to do the right thing: Live up to your promise. Live up to what the scientific evidence shows. Refuse the advice of your Attorney General and don't appeal this. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General, Speaker.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm surprised to hear that from a former Attorney General that he would ask for the politicization of a decision on a particular appeal, that he would ask that we in fact should have politics that determine the position we take before the courts. Maybe that's what you did when you were Attorney General, but that's not what we do in this government. We feel that we need to continue to do what—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): It's the government's decision, Mr. Speaker. He's misleading—

The Speaker: Order. I ask the member for Whitby-Ajax to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Flaherty: I withdraw it.

Hon. Michael Bryant: The question is whether or not—as the Supreme Court of Canada held last November—legislatures and government are in the best position to design programs that are in the interests of autistic children, or whether the courts, based upon the evidence of particular litigants before them, are in fact in the best position to do that. The court said that it's up to the government. The government is putting forward substantial improvements for preschool and school-aged autistic children, and that is what we committed to do. We're providing those improvements. I will continue before the courts to defend the ability of this Legislature to conduct that kind of business that, again, we feel is in the best interests of autistic children in Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: This is what Madam Justice Kiteley had to say about some of these programs that the McGuinty government now wants to laud. Madam Justice Kiteley said, "The Minister [of Education's] duty is to ensure that appropriate special education programs and special education services are provided ... without payment of fees." She ruled that the Minister of Education violated the Education Act, and said, "The minister failed"—he failed—"to respond to the needs of children with autism." He failed "to develop policy and give direction to the school boards to ensure that ... IBI services were provided to children with autism in schools." He failed by creating "systemic barriers to children with autism accessing learning." Just about everything you've tried to pronounce on here today Madam Justice Kiteley considered here in Ontario, and she said you're violating the Charter of Rights and you're denying these children the services they should receive in terms of equality of access.

When, Premier, are you going to live up to your promise and respect the Charter of Rights?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: No member of this House has a monopoly on compassion and sympathy for this particular issue, I say to the member. We in this government are moving forward with substantial improvements and programs for the treatment of autistic children.

The legal issue that has just been articulated by the leader of the NDP has also been considered by the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Supreme Court of Canada said last November, on the subject of the provision of specific treatment programs for autistic children, that it isn't for the courts to determine that; that the government and the Legislature are in the best position to determine that. That's what this case is about.

We will stand behind our record in terms of the assistance, the lowering of waiting lists, the increased treatment of autistic children and the provision of new programs that had never existed before through a public school system, and we'll continue before the courts to

make sure that we have the flexibility to do that, because we believe that's in the best interest of Ontario families.

Mr. Hampton: I want to speak about integrity. I want to speak about the integrity of someone who would write to the parent of an autistic child and say, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." I want to ask about the integrity of someone who would say that during an election campaign to the mother of an autistic child and then, right after the election campaign, deny that you said it, deny the service, and now, when the Superior Court of Justice in Ontario rules that are you discriminating against these children, try to run and hide from that. I want to ask about the integrity of someone who does that.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: We have increased treatment by 25%. We have lowered waiting lists by more than 70%. We have provided new programs for all school-aged autistic children. The purpose of that was to provide improvements. Our commitment was better public services, better services for autistic children, and that's what we are trying to do in this government.

This case is before the courts. We are appealing the ability of the government to deliver upon its commitment to improve services for autistic children, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek your good judgment and clarification. I have here the Official Report of Debates (Hansard), number 121, published under your name. It's with respect to the comments made earlier today. I would like to quote the government House Leader, on page 5854: "What's different about what we're doing is that we're not trying to mislead people..." and the NDP member said, "The only thing that's been misleading is a Premier ..."

You ruled when the member for Whitby–Ajax used the word "misleading." Which is it today, sir? Which word—

The Speaker: Order. Sit down. That is not a point of order at this time.

Mr. Baird: It's not?

The Speaker: No.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm anxious to ask a question of the Premier. Today we learned in the Toronto Star that some Liberal political staff members have been ordered by the Premier's office not to speak to reporters. Furthermore, it's my understanding that public servants in the Ministry of Health have been instructed not to speak with opposition members of provincial Parliament, to refuse to answer our questions, and instead refer all inquiries from opposition MPPs to political staff in the minister's office. Would the Premier not agree that this demonstrates that the government is becoming paranoid?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): No, I do not agree with that.

Mr. Arnott: On Tuesday, March 15, I was advised by the Minister of Health's MPP liaison that ministry public service staff are not permitted to speak with MPPs. He verbally confirmed that there has been a directive issued to public servants forbidding communications with MPPs and requiring all contact to be channelled through political staff.

This effort to marginalize opposition MPPs is highly offensive and outrageous, and is contemptuous of members of the Legislature who are responsible for advocating on behalf of the constituents each of us represent. In turn, it also demonstrates a dismissive disregard for all of our constituents who elected us. This is also an insult to the professional and independent public servants, who are being denied the trust and confidence they have earned by the positions they hold.

Will the Premier commit to looking into this matter and immediately rescind this autocratic dictate?

1500

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I recall a time when Minister Wilson, I think it was, threatened to fire any civil servant who talked to the opposition. I recall those days. I am confident that we've come a long way since that point in time.

It is our intention, notwithstanding anything that anybody has put out there, to ensure that MPPs on either side of the House have access to the information they need to carry out their responsibilities as representatives of their constituents.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. I want you to meet some of the parents and children who are part of the Wynberg and Deskin lawsuit. They're in the gallery today. They are Robyn and Simon Wynberg, Tammy Starr and Arthur Fleischmann, Perry Taylor, Richard Marcovitz and Sheila Laredo, Suzanne Wetzell, Brenda Lumsden-Johanson, Maria Velasquez, Susan Elsworth, Natoma Houston and Benjamin, and Cindy, Jordan and Anthony Faria. Eleven-year-old Anthony even testified in court about how IBI had helped him.

For the past five years, these families have waged a court battle against the previous government and against your government to try to get the services their children need. They've mortgaged or sold their homes, borrowed heavily from family members, held community fundraisers and faced financial ruin, all to try to pay for IBI for their children and the legal costs to get what they need for their children. At long last, the court has ruled in their favour.

Premier, don't abuse these families any more. Do what you promised in the last election. Tell these children and these families you will not appeal this decision. What's your answer, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm not sure that this was a question, but obviously the government will continue to comply with the order that has been in place that will see the 30 families that are the subject of this particular action continue to receive the treatment pursuant to the order. That will continue. If that was the member's question, then of course we will be complying with that order.

Ms. Martel: They were paying for the treatment long before Justice Kiteley finally had to rule your government in contempt and force payment for treatment. That only happened in the last number of months, and you know it, Attorney General.

I want to remind the Premier, though, of the promise he made in the last election. He said, and I quote again, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children ... is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

Well, Justice Kiteley agrees with you, Premier. She found that the lack of IBI for children over six is discriminatory, has violated the constitutional rights of autistic children and must end. The parents won, Premier. You lost, and your government should get over it. It would be unconscionable for you now to drag these parents and other parents through the court one more time. Keep the promise you made during the election. Tell the parents you'll agree and respect this ruling. Tell them you'll provide the services their children and other autistic children need. Will you do that today, Premier?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: There are, of course, a number of matters that are before the courts. It goes without saying that we will continue to take the position that the Supreme Court of Canada has articulated, which is that governments and Legislatures should be in a position to fight for autistic children, not a judge with a particular case. I would anticipate that if the result had been otherwise, the parties in this matter would have also appealed on the other side of this matter.

Our position has been that governments and the Legislature should have the—

Ms. Martel: It's shameful. Your position is absolutely—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Order. Could I ask the member from Nickel Belt to come to order, please.

Ms. Martel: It is. It's unconscionable that you're going to drag these parents through the courts one more time.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm going to ask the member from Nickel Belt to come to order.

Ms. Martel: No, Speaker, I'm sorry. Shame on this whole government. They made promises to win the election that were good enough to get their votes, and now, after the election, what do they do? Discrimination, one more time. How much taxpayers' money are you going

to spend? What's wrong with you people? Look at yourselves in the mirror. Look at them.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I ask members to respect the decorum of the House. Come to order so we can proceed with our question period.

Member from Nickel Belt, I've been very patient with you.

New question.

FARM RETAIL SALES TAX EXEMPTION

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. There have been difficult times in the agriculture sector. Many of my constituents have contacted me to share their personal hardships and to seek help from this government. I was pleased to hear at the beginning of last week that we're providing support to the farmers of Chatham-Kent Essex through the additional \$79 million to Ontario grain and oilseed farmers and \$50 million under the tobacco community transition fund.

On Friday, you made yet another announcement that will certainly help to eliminate a process that has caused some stress for some farmers. Would you tell my constituents what exactly the announcement of the point-of-sale retail sales tax exemption will mean for farmers in my area?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We are acting, and we listen to what general farm organizations have to say. This is a commitment that we made in the 2004 budget. Through the Ministry of Finance, we're streamlining the process for farmers to receive their RST exemption on purchasing eligible farm-related goods, services and insurance for their businesses. In order to simplify the process for obtaining point-of-sale RST exemption, Ontario producers will be allowed to use their general farm organization ID cards in lieu of purchase exemption certificates.

I quote from the April 1, 2005, Ontario Federation of Agriculture press release: "We've been working with governments for five years to get this convenience for its members." Unlike the previous government, which had deaf ears to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, we worked with them. We're not going to make farmers wait any longer, like the previous government did.

Mr. Hoy: This certainly is welcome news in the agricultural area. On behalf of my constituents in Chatham-Kent Essex, how exactly will this work? Will vendors know that the general farm organization cards are all that is needed in order to get the exemption on agricultural items? And whom can they contact for more information about the exemption?

Hon. Mr. Peters: The Ministry of Finance has sent out an information notice to all vendors across the province who are in the agribusiness industry to make them aware. As well, all commercial farmers will be receiving notice of this initiative from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

At the time of purchase, the farmer would show his membership card from his general farm organization. The vendor would record that information and the number printed on the card and exempt the farmer from paying retail sales tax. This applies to all purchases that are designated under the Retail Sales Act.

Where a farmer is not a member of a general farm organization, they can still participate in this program. They are still eligible for the sales tax exemption, but there will be more paperwork involved. If they do need further information, please, to any farmer, don't hesitate to contact any one of us in this House as MPPs, or the Ministry of Finance tax-back service.

TEACHER TESTING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. The credibility gap between your rhetoric about stability in classrooms in this province and reality is continuing to grow. You cancelled a professional development program and replaced it with nothing. You introduced new bargaining rules, and you have literally hundreds of thousands of children wondering what is happening in their classrooms. Strike action is escalating every day. Today you're chastised by the Ontario Superior Court for not carrying out your responsibility as the Minister of Education toward autistic children.

In your March 24 letter, now you've given a free pass to literally thousands of graduates from faculties of education in this province who will not require a qualifying test to teach in our classrooms. I ask the minister why he believes it's appropriate that teachers would move from graduating into the classrooms without qualifying tests in this province. Is that his view of escalating the quality of teaching in our province?

1510

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It's always helpful to have the member opposite articulate problems, because he just reminds us how far we've come from what was there before in terms of old attitudes.

Under the previous government, we lost one in three new teachers, at a cost every year of \$30 million, because the environment was so poor, the training was so insufficient and because, frankly, that government didn't appreciate good public services.

There had been a test that new teachers coming out of university had to write, which 99% of them passed. But that government was prepared, for political reasons, to have \$5 million to \$6 million spent every year. We think it would be far better to provide an induction program for new teachers, that they go through that and then have an assessment after they've been in a classroom, after we see how they're actually getting good at teaching.

The point of education on this side of the House is to provide better services to students, not better headlines, and not to attack teachers as you did, ultimately so unsuccessfully, year after year after year.

Mr. Klees: Once again, obviously the word of this Premier means nothing. On Focus Ontario, here's what the Premier said: "I agree that teachers should be tested. New teachers should be tested. I think that teachers should be tested as nothing more and nothing less than professionals." He goes on to say that, just like other professionals, "They're all tested at the beginning of their professional careers in order to be admitted to the profession."

Now we have this minister saying, "Well, we'll admit all of them. We'll give them a pass so they can get into the classroom, and then at some point along the way we'll find some way to figure out whether they qualify to be there."

Does he agree or does he not agree with his Premier that teachers, like every other professional, should be qualified before they enter the profession, and if so, why didn't he get about the business of ensuring that there was a qualifying test? He has had 10 months to do it since he eliminated the existing test that was there. What has the minister been doing for 10 months?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: It's evident to many other people that what we've been doing is providing better education to students. That's what has taken all of our attention. These power struggles that you want to perpetuate with teachers or school boards are not what get our attention.

There was an inconsistency. If you were trained outside the province of Ontario, you got to practise as a teacher for one year and then you went through an assessment. All we're doing is putting all teachers on exactly the same footing. All teachers will have either an interim certificate, for those trained internationally, or a provisional certificate, for those trained here. They will then go through, for the first time, we believe—and we're taking the time to sit down and work out with the sector the details of an induction program: support for them in their first year of teaching, additional training so they will be better teachers. At the end of that, there will be some form of assessment where we bring together some way of making sure that their probation and the other measures they go through are there to support better teaching.

We make no apologies for that. Our emphasis is on students getting better teaching and better learning. We're working together with the entire education sector to make that happen.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Premier, when young Cameron Walsh down in Welland was diagnosed with autism, he was put on the waiting list for government-funded IBI treatment. When he turned six, he still hadn't reached the head of the line, and he was told that he was no longer eligible. His parents, Leo and Sheri, purchased IBI treatment at a cost of \$2,800 a month, but the bank account finally ran dry. There's no more credit. They've literally used all of their credit, all of their credit cards, every available penny, every bit of resources made

available to them by relatives and raised during the course of fundraisers and their son now doesn't receive IBI. Of course, they believed you during the last election campaign when you promised that their son Cameron would get IBI treatment.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Question?

Mr. Kormos: Why are you not prepared to keep your promise to Leo and Sheri Walsh and their boy Cameron?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): We have worked very tirelessly on reducing the wait list for children so that they don't age out, so that they do get the IBI treatment they need under the age of six, and that has resulted in a 25% increased number of children who are receiving IBI treatment.

As well, we worked very hard on the number of assessments for children awaiting IBI treatment. There is a 72% reduction in the wait list for assessments. We're working as fast as we can. We understand this is very difficult for the families, but we are determined to help these families.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is again to the minister.

Madam Minister, you will remember that about two months ago I stood in this House and talked about Michelle Quance and her wonderful four-and-a-half-year-old daughter Tennyson.

On this historic day, the day when the Ontario Superior Court has upheld and fortified the argument we have made so many times on this side of the House, that the lack of IBI treatment for Ontario's autistic children is immoral, you also know it is unconstitutional and it is illegal.

Madam Minister, you will remember that Tennyson was diagnosed with autism last June and, since that time, her family has been forced to raise thousands of dollars from their neighbours and to mortgage their house. You will know that the family is spending \$6,600 a month trying to get that very same treatment that your government promised. I recently found out that she's gone all the way from 10th on the list to second—one space a month. Will you please tell this family, and all the other Ontario families with autistic children, that you can and will set up their IBI treatments today, not next year, in line with what the court has said?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: We are working as quickly as possible. We've hired over a hundred new therapists in less than eight months to deal with this crisis.

I agree with the member opposite that it is difficult for the parent of that four-year-old to wait. But as I know the honourable member understands, he would not want any child to bump any other child on a wait list. That's not the solution. The solution is to build capacity so that we

eliminate the wait list. That's what we're determined to do, and we're well on track in meeting that goal.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. It goes without saying that water is one of our most important resources. In the wake of the Walkerton disaster, we all know how fragile our sources of drinking water can be.

In a recent report from the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, they indicated that despite all the improvements since Walkerton, industrial pollution remains a viable hazard to our water supply. Between 2002 and 2003, there were 2,500 documented pollution violations by industry, including 2,300 water pollution violations. In 2003 alone, there were 102 illegal spills of such substances as ammonia, arsenic and carcinogenic solvents into Ontario's water. More than five million litres of toxic material were illegally discharged, endangering wildlife and people who depend on clean, drinkable water.

Minister, I know you take the safety of our water seriously and have implemented programs to protect it. Can you explain these programs to us?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very proud to say that protecting our water is a priority for this government. I too was very disturbed when I saw the report from the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, and I think it very accurately demonstrated that the previous government was, quite frankly, unwilling to deal with nasty polluters.

After coming to office, very early in 2004 I deployed the Ministry of the Environment SWAT team to the Sarnia area, which was the site of many of these incidences. I also implemented the industrial pollution action team. This was a team of local representatives and experts in science to provide me with recommendations on how, going forward, we can prevent these events from happening. I'm very happy to say that that team has provided this ministry with a report and I look forward to developing an action plan to ensure that these events are reduced and hopefully, ultimately, absolutely removed from this province.

1520

Mr. Brownell: Thank you, Minister, for explaining the programs you have in store for keeping our water safe. I know you have worked hard on this issue and you take water seriously.

While addressing that the state of the water is important, it does not completely solve the problem. Sierra Legal's research indicated that there were 21 companies with 10 or more violations of Ontario's water pollution laws. As long as companies feel they can get away with violating water pollution rules with little penalty, the problem will persist. In my own riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, illegal emissions from industrial facilities have contributed to a buildup of mercury in the St. Lawrence river. Could you explain to us what

your ministry is doing to hold accountable those companies that would violate our laws and contaminate our waters?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: First, I would like to identify the environmental leaders program. That is a program that our ministry has set up where we identify those industries that are leaders, that go above and beyond good environmental performance. Our government has also introduced Bill 133. That is a penalties bill that, if passed, would require companies responsible for illegal spills to pay a penalty, and that penalty will go directly to a specific fund dedicated to compensating communities that have been impacted in a negative way, whether they've had to purchase water or implement an alert system. Whatever expenses they might have incurred to manage a spill event, there will now, if this legislation is passed, be an opportunity for communities to access that.

I'm very happy to say I've recently had a conversation with David Suzuki. He's very supportive of this legislation and believes that it's important that we send a clear message that we intend to protect the water for the people of this province.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship responsible for disabled persons. In your last budget, your government delisted physio, chiro and ophthalmology services in OHIP. Last week there was a news release announced by your government that you had made a mistake and you were reinstating physiotherapy services for what are "the highest-need Ontarians." In particular, you referenced the Ontario disabilities support program.

As MPPs, all of us enjoy a benefits package that includes our physio and chiropractic coverage. This is a luxury that persons who are disabled don't enjoy. So my question to you, why did you support the disabled community to reinstate medically necessary physiotherapy services, yet you refuse to stand up and support the disability community in order to receive medically necessary chiropractic treatments?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I support my colleague the Minister of Health 100% with his redefinition of the physiotherapy listing. We will be assisting seniors 65 and over, all people age 19 and under, long-term-care residents of all ages, people of all ages needing short-term physiotherapy, people of all ages requiring physiotherapy after overnight hospitalization and, to your question, people of all ages receiving physiotherapy who are recipients of the Ontario disability support program, Ontario Works or family benefits. I have full confidence that my colleague the Minister of Health studied this issue, and I support all of his decisions on this issue.

Mr. Jackson: It appears you continue to support discrimination against Ontario's disabled citizens. This government received over 600,000 petitions from persons

seeking reinstatement of both physio and chiropractic services. Your own government's backgrounder describes how a 23-year-old woman on social assistance who hurt her back will receive OHIP coverage for physiotherapy, but she cannot choose chiropractic services, even though the evidence is quite clear that her chiropractic treatment is both more cost-effective as a treatment and more effective overall as a treatment. Even the WSIB has concluded that, with treatment, she can return to fully functioning in half the time and will be half as likely to have a chronic condition.

My question is, when the evidence is abundantly clear that your decision on chiropractic continues to discriminate against persons with disabilities, when are you going to actually sit down or get your government to sit down with the Ontario chiropractors' association, which they've been requesting for six months, in order to look at ways in which we can end the discrimination against disabled persons who are seeking this medically necessary treatment in our province?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Again, I support my colleague the Minister of Health and the government in the delisting of chiropractic and optometry, and I do support my colleague in the physiotherapy relisting. He studied this and his ministry studied this, and I support his decision.

But on the rights of the disabled, we are bringing forward an Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act that has been lauded as one of the best in the world, if it passes. I will take no lecture from the member opposite, given the weak bill his government brought in, in comparison to what we're bringing in, where we have people with disabilities at the table developing standards that will be met, will be complied with, and if not, will be enforced by penalty.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. I have a message from Dave and Cathy Davies of Hamilton East. They want you to obey the court and end your discrimination against autistic children in Ontario aged six and over. The Davies want you to ensure that autistic children, regardless of their age, receive the medically necessary IBI treatment they need. The Davies' son, Jordon, turns 13 in June. He was never able to access government-funded IBI. The court says today that you cannot legally deny Jordon treatment any longer.

Will you look at these people here today, and will you tell Dave and Cathy Davies of Hamilton East that you will heed the court's decision? Will you listen to the pleas from parents like Mr. and Mrs. Davies, or will you prolong the suffering of autistic children and their parents' anguish by depriving the children of the treatment they need to function in life? Will you continue to force their parents into decisions about their care that no parent should be expected to make in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): We understand that this is a difficult issue for the families. My colleague the Attorney General has already stated that he's appealed the decision. The government is reviewing the implications of the decision and what this means to programming.

What we have done for the children under six is try to get, as much as possible, the IBI treatment for them so they can then generalize their skills when they reach school age. I understand that this young person may not have received IBI because of his being 13 and it's a relatively new program. But what we had, even before our government, in Hamilton—I worked in the Hamilton board of education; I'm not sure which of the two boards of education the young person attends, but there are programs in both for children with autism. As well, we have just instituted a new education program of resource people going into boards across the province, because, quite frankly, there were gaps—

Interjection.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I know the member from Nepean–Carleton knows there were gaps. In northern Ontario, for example, there was nobody there. We have instituted a program that will begin to close those gaps across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Adam Shane of Mississauga is here today, and he needs intensive behavioural intervention in order to attend school. His teacher, his special education teacher and his principal all agree that IBI therapists should be allowed into the classroom. The Peel District School Board said no; therefore he cannot get IBI at school. At the same time, in September, Erin Oak, the centre for developmentally challenged children, gave Adam more hours of treatment but also changed their hours of operation. So to access the additional treatment, his mother, Lynn, who's here today, has to pull him out of school two afternoons a week to attend Erin Oak.

In her ruling, Justice Kiteley said that you have failed to “develop policy and give direction to the school boards to ensure that ABA/IBI services are provided to children with autism in schools.”

Minister, when will you assume the responsibility and the social obligation you have as a government and ensure that Adam and other autistic children like him receive the widely hailed IBI treatment in school?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: The Minister of Education.

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): We have in education right now an outlook on special-needs children; that is, \$365 million dollars in more resources, 65% more resources in the last two years. Children with recognized exceptionalities include almost 7,000 children with autism and spectrum disorder. We have around \$130

million worth of services directed to those children today. Independent of what happens in terms of the courts, we are determined to provide the best educational services possible. We are in the process of an overall review of special education right now and we are providing the additional resources right now, as we speak, into those schools.

It is our intention to provide for children with special needs in the province. We've been doing that in an accelerated fashion and we're going to continue to do that, because we accept the responsibility we've always had.

1530

AMBER ALERT ON LOTTERY TERMINALS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The Amber Alert program is a very important tool when a child is abducted. While it's unfortunate that we ever need to use it, it has proven to be very successful in the past. I'm happy to hear that we're expanding the program to reach more people who might be able to help track down a missing child. Anything we can do to help abducted children and their families during this nightmare situation is positive.

Minister, as the father of a seven-year-old and a five-year-old, I want to thank you and ask what action you have taken on this issue.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'd like to thank the member for Peterborough. This morning, the Premier announced that Ontario's 9,000 lottery terminals would join Ontario's Amber Alert child abduction warning system. This is the first Canadian province to use its lottery network in this way. I'm very proud of the fact that the Premier made that announcement this morning, because it will mean that everyone in the province will be more involved in trying to finding an abducted child. It means that starting tomorrow, we will harness the power of Ontario's network of 9,000 lottery terminals to get the word out about an abducted child.

This is another way that the government is using its resources to make Ontario and Ontarians safer. This is a very good example of good government, and that's what this government is all about.

Mr. Leal: To the Minister Community Safety and Correctional Services: The McGuinty government came to office with a commitment to build strong and safe communities. Among the most important things we can do is to ensure the safety of our children. I know that, among other things, we're ready to take action on cyber-proofing our kids and protecting them from Internet crimes, as well as appointing a safe schools action team to protect students in the classroom.

I was glad to hear that we're going to expand the Amber Alert program, which helps spread the word about children who have been abducted. Minister, can you tell me what the expansion of the Amber Alert program

means for abducted children and their families in Ontario?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. The expansion of the Amber Alert is very important. The OPP—

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): I just want to confirm—I thought the last question was for the Minister for Economic Development and Trade. You've got to put the question back to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, please.

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the Ontario Provincial Police have responsibility for initiating an Amber Alert. The whole reason behind the Amber Alert program is to make sure that if there is information about an abduction—the time to act has been determined to be between two and five hours. The only way we can really get input from the public is to expand as much as we can the information we have on that particular abduction. In the past, we have been using the Ministry of Transportation signs on the highways and we've been using the media—television, cable and radio. Today we announced that we're expanding it by 9,000 outlets with lottery terminals. This means we will get the message out to far more people and we'll be far more effective in trying to bring to a successful and safe conclusion the report of an abduction.

PETITIONS

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr. Jim Flaherty (Whitby–Ajax): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children's aid society's recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

"Whereas the introduction of a 'volunteer' into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the principal; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council."

I've signed my name.

The Speaker (Hon. Alvin Curling): Could I ask members to be just a bit quieter, please, so I can hear the petitions?

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate this opportunity. This is a petition that is written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community;

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name to this petition and hand it over to Zoé, our page.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from 6,500 people wanting to save the Rideau Regional Centre in Smith Falls.

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a 'centre of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

As I said, that's 6,500 people from across Ontario who are looking out for our most vulnerable people, and they want the Rideau Regional Centre to stay open.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition from the Dover Square Tenants Association on Rusholme Road, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the so-called Tenant Protection Act of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

"Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal ... created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs, and this same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants; and

"Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board ... to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound in order to circumvent city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city's opposition to its project;

"Whereas this project would lead to overcrowding in our densely populated community, reduce our precious green space, further drive up rents and do nothing to solve the crisis in affordable rental housing;

"Whereas this project will drive away longer-term tenants partially shielded from the post-1998 Harris-Eves rent increases, thereby further reducing the number of relatively affordable units in the city core; and

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"Whereas before the October 2003 elections Premier McGuinty promised 'real protection for tenants at all times' and a radical overhaul of the pro-developer OMB; and

"Whereas our own MPP, Liberal Tony Ruprecht, called for a rent rollback ... at a public event in June 2003....

"We, the undersigned residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To institute a rent freeze until the exorbitant Tory guideline and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by inflation;

"To abrogate the Harris-Eves 'Tenant Protection Act' and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord ORHT...;

"To keep the McGuinty government to its promise of real changes at the OMB," the Ontario Municipal Board, "eliminating its bias toward wealthy developers and enhancing the power of groups promoting affordable housing, sustainable neighbourhoods and tenant rights."

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition from the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal Income Tax Act at present has a minimum amount of medical expenses for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit;

"Whereas the health and medical expenses of every citizen in the province of Ontario, great or small, affect their overall net income;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget on May 18, 2004, to delist publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic services, optometry examinations, and" some "physiotherapy services;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Income Tax Act remove the present minimum amount of medical expenses for which an Ontario taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit."

I'm pleased to sign this. By the way, I have a private member's bill on this as well that I'd like the government to support.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition from the riding of Peterborough. It's an Ontario petition to stop private P3 hospitals.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all hospitals since the inception of public medicare in Canada have been non-profit;

"Whereas 'public-private partnership' (P3) hospitals turn over democratic community control to international investors, making a public service into a commodity sold for profit;

"Whereas worldwide evidence is that private (P3) hospitals lead to doctor, nurse, staff and bed cuts in hospitals in order to make room for profit-taking, consultant fees, higher borrowing costs and outrageous executive salaries;

"Whereas private (P3) hospitals hide information about the use of tax dollars by claiming 'commercial secrecy' when they privatize public institutions;

"Whereas the higher costs, user fees, two-tier services and the culture of private (P3) hospitals risk the future sustainability of our public medicare system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to

"(1) Stop all current and future 'public-private partnership' (P3) hospital deals and return full ownership, operation, management and delivery of hospital services to non-profit hands, and

"(2) Develop a plan to fund new hospitals through public finance, clearly excluding the privatization of hospital services."

I'll give it to Stephanie, our page here.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to be able to rise and read this petition into the record. It's from a lot of my rural constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park due to the lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

"Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis, and they will be demonstrating their resolve and determination at Queen's Park on March 9;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deal with the serious issue of farm income as brought forward by the Rural Revolution's resolutions to respect property and prosperity as follows:

"Resolution 4: Federal and provincial governments have created a bureaucratic environment that legalizes the theft of millions of dollars of rural business and farm income. All money found to be removed from rural" Ontario "landowners, farmers and business shall be returned."

I affix my signature to the petition.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions regarding broken bottles and the recycling program. This is a very short petition. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment:

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment."

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am the proud recipient of a number of petitions from the riding of Durham, and I'm pleased to present them on their behalf. Let me get a new one here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen's Park because of a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty

government to farm-related issues"—the minister is here in the House today—"and

"Whereas farming in Ontario is in crisis because of the impacts of BSE, unfair subsidies from other jurisdictions and bureaucratic/legislative burdens that fail to understand the value of agriculture as a strategic industry; and

"Whereas the current prices for farm products do not allow for sustainable agriculture in Canada, with a 10.7% decline in the number of Canadian farms reported between 1996 and 2001;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask"—politely—"the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consult with Ontario farmers to develop a long-term strategy to ensure the viability of agriculture in our province and to develop immediate short-term solutions, such as support for grain and oilseed producers, a workable production insurance program for horticulture and a CAIS program that delivers real income support on a timely" and sustainable "basis."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of the farming community in the riding of Durham.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here. It's about two and a half minutes long. It says:

"Whereas the so-called 'Tenant Protection Act' of the defeated Harris-Eves Tories has allowed landlords to increase rents well above the rate of inflation for new and old tenants alike;

"Whereas the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal created by this act regularly awards major and permanent additional rent increases to landlords to pay for required one-time improvements and temporary increases in utility costs and this same act has given landlords wide-ranging powers to evict tenants; and

"Whereas our landlord, Sterling Karamar Property Management, has applied to the Ontario Municipal Board to add a fourth high-rise unit to our compound, in order to circumvent city of Toronto restrictions on density and the city's opposition to its project;

"Whereas the project"—there are a lot of "whereases." I'll move on here. It says:

"We, the undersigned residents of Doversquare Apartments in Toronto, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows." Now, this is interesting:

"To institute a new rent freeze until the exorbitant Tory guidelines and above-guideline rent increases are wiped out by" the Harris "inflation"—excuse me, "wiped out by inflation." I don't have my glasses. That's why I'm having a hard time.

"To abrogate the Harris-Eves 'Tenant Protection Act' and draw up new landlord-tenant legislation which shuts down the notoriously pro-landlord OHRT and reinstates real rent control, including the elimination of the Tory policy of 'vacancy decontrol';

"To keep the McGuinty government to its promise of real changes at the OMB, eliminating its bias toward

wealthy developers and enhancing the power of groups promoting affordable housing, sustainable neighbourhoods and tenant rights.”

I present that on behalf of those fine constituents from Dovercourt.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): This is what we call a doubleheader in one day. I'm pleased to present this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. Dr. Farooq Khan sent me this.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal Income Tax Act at present has a minimum amount of medical expenses for which a taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit”—shameful.

“Whereas the health and medical expenses of every citizen in the province of Ontario, great or small, affect their overall net income;

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government moved in their 2004 budget on May 18, 2004, to delist” currently “publicly funded medical services such as chiropractic services, optometry examinations and physiotherapy services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Income Tax Act remove the present minimum amount of medical expenses for which an Ontario taxpayer is entitled to claim a non-refundable income tax credit.”

I am pleased to support this on behalf of the people who are paying more and getting less in the province of Ontario.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPPORT ARREARS ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OBLIGATIONS FAMILIALES ET L'EXÉCUTION DES ARRIÉRÉS D'ALIMENTS

Mrs. Papatello moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / *Projet de loi 155, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les obligations familiales et l'exécution des arriérés d'aliments et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.*

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to be here to talk about one of my favourite subject matters in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and that is the Family Responsibility Office.

To the staff of the Family Responsibility Office, I want to say a very special thank you from the leadership of the government. I know how much our Premier appreciates the fact that our MPP offices' phones are just not ringing like they used to; let me say that. As someone who used to bring my concerns about FRO to this Legislature, as most of us in the House have experienced over the last 10 years, let me just say that sometimes our phones of course still ring, but on the matter of FRO the issues are different and they are not as frequent as they used to be. I'm very happy to have played a part in that. The director at FRO has worked diligently with her staff to bring forward changes, and finally she's had a government that has listened to the kind of support they have required for a long, long time.

Let me say a couple of things first: I'm pleased to stand and talk about Bill 155 today, the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act. I want to talk for a moment about what we inherited, so that people can see the contrast, because I think that's important, and I want to tell you about the plan that we will accomplish.

When we took office, there had been virtually no improvements made to FRO, even though for years Ontario Ombudsmen and the Provincial Auditor, since 1993, had talked to us about the changes that we needed—1993. This is not a johnny-come-lately problem; it's been around a long time.

In 1996, I think all of us remember, in particular those of us who were MPPs at the time, when the Tories shut down the regional offices. It had a devastating effect on the people who depended on this office essentially for their support in order for the families to carry on. That move exacerbated the problems. All of the offices shipped their files to a central location. I think we remember all the shenanigans around that and even some charges that potentially may have been laid as a result of people wanting to make inquiries, as I recall. But the office was ill-equipped to handle all of the boxes that arrived at their doorstep. I remember having to understand why we had to reinforce the floors because of the sheer weight of the papers that arrived at this office. You can imagine what was left in the hands of the staff to have to cope with there.

It was a disaster waiting to happen. We saw that in every MPP's office. Almost without exception, the phones were ringing off the hook and we could not believe the mess that families were in. Parents who had always been in compliance were suddenly getting notices that they were out of compliance, if you remember those examples, and families who knew that the spouse who was to pay had sent the money simply weren't receiving the money. The situations were unbelievable.

We found that the last auditor's review—and that was before we became the government—that landed on my desk said some significant things. A number of cases with significant arrears were simply not assigned to caseworkers and, therefore, not actively enforced. We saw an increase in the caseload of 40% from 1994 to 2003; 126,000 cases flew upwards to 180,000. Staff efforts to enforce support obligations and to provide responsive services continued at that time to be significantly hampered by the office's inability to develop and implement the necessary improvements to the computer system. The computer system was frequently referenced each time they had an auditor's report. Imagine at that time that 90% of the calls coming from outside Toronto were not able to get through. They were blocked.

In 1997-98, the provincial Ombudsman—Roberta Jamieson at the time—said that her office “found a number of cases indicating problems.” She talked about cases with substantial outstanding arrears, where no payments were being made and no enforcement action was being taken.

In 2001, the provincial Ombudsman, Clare Lewis, wrote that it was clear there was “significantly ill-suited supporting technology,” which, in his view, “must be replaced if the FRO is to meet its mandate,” and further, “to ensure that the FRO obtains a new computer system that meets its operational needs.”

I also need to bring to the attention of this House today what the Provincial Auditor had to say in 1999 in his value-for-money audit: “We noted that when payors went into arrears, the office did not have a satisfactory system of initiating contact and taking the appropriate enforcement action.”

Although they had plenty of opportunities, the previous government's meagre efforts to address the auditor's and Ombudsmen's concerns were no match for the growing problems at the Family Responsibility Office. In fact, in 1999, the auditor said that the “technology enhancements did not address the 1994 audit findings related to the computer system.” On and on. In 2001, he stated again that “continuing action was required to implement most...” Two years later, he said, “[I]t is in grave danger of failing to meet its mandated responsibilities.”

I don't know how much more serious it could have become before the government needed to step forward and take some action here.

I want to say that I was happy to run on a platform that said we really were going to do something. You needed to be the MPP from the ridings that were having such tremendous difficulties and meeting families who simply couldn't cope, often because of administrative-type cases, administrative issues or simply lack of staff to attend to these people's problems. Those comments by independent officers of the Legislature, that's what we inherited at the FRO. That's where we were starting from. When we became the government, one of the first things I did was have a visit to the FRO office, something that we weren't able to do when we were in opposition,

although some of my colleagues managed to make a little visit, regardless.

I've said in this Legislature before, and I will say again, that I was struck by the industrial-revolution-type assembly line processes that were in place there. I remember in particular, it is such a paper-based system that the staff actually wore white gloves to protect their hands from all the paper cuts from the managing and handling and rehandling of paper. We simply hadn't given them the tools to be more computer-based so they wouldn't put themselves at risk in that way.

We began round tables across Ontario.

The member for Oshawa is laughing, but they actually gave me my own pair of white gloves as a little gift in terms of my visit to the FRO office, which I still keep in my desk drawer to this day. They knew how struck I was by this antiquated system that we've been dealing with.

We started round tables across Ontario because we wanted to bring in people who used the system to ask them very directly, “What is the problem from your perspective?” We held them in London. We held them in Niagara. We held them in Windsor. We held them in Thunder Bay. We received a number of reports, and I'm happy to say that over 80% of the feedback that we got is now being implemented or is on its way to being implemented. I'm very happy to say that. We went out there, we went to listen to people, and now we have proof in the pudding that we are responding to what people said could actually improve the system.

The consultations centred on three areas: how we administer the office, the actual administrative functions; we talked about what we need to put in our arsenal for getting people into compliance, to get them to pay their orders; and we had justice issues as well, as part of our conversation, because so many of us so often get calls about what the support order is. People don't realize that we are not responsible for the order, just the implementation of the order, just getting people into compliance for the order, and that in fact those are issues better dealt with through the Attorney General's office and certainly through the federal government and their various regulations. So we wanted to be clear about what we were talking to people about.

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Following our consultations with people, we came up with a plan to increase enforcement, enhance efficiency and improve fairness at FRO. I think every one of us in this House has heard from all sides—from dads, from moms—each one thinking that the system somehow benefits the other. I just want to say that we have taken a number of initiatives here in this bill. I was very happy, when the bill was tabled for first reading, that even the media response to that was, “Do you know what? It sounds like it's fair.” We are putting measures in place to be fair, because every one of us, as an MPP, has to work with both sides in what is so clearly an acrimonious situation in terms of the couple, their children and support.

In February 2004, we announced a plan that would start to improve the Family Responsibility Office for

good. It was a plan that moved forward by making immediate improvements to customer service. We laid the foundation for significant long-term change in the way that the office actually works, making FRO more accessible to those who rely on it. We established a dedicated customer service unit of 26 staff to divert admin. calls away from the more difficult calls that require some time, and away from those enforcement-type calls. This alone allows our enforcement office to answer 1,600 more calls a day. We've made enforcement a priority. We are freeing up enforcement staff, and that enables us to focus solely on tracking down the deadbeats and enforcing the court orders.

We are tracking down the deadbeats. We've created a special trace-and-locate unit—we happily called it our own version of the CSI unit, from that TV show—with people dedicated to looking. This new unit will have access to databases across the province, such as those provided to us from the Ministry of Transportation. The unit started by conducting an intensive search of the over 2,500 pieces of mail that gets returned to the FRO office every month. Imagine: Prior to this, they didn't have staff people to look at the mail that got returned to its own office. By looking at simple address changes, we were able to get information to people and bring them into compliance.

Understanding the consequences of failing to comply: Let me be clear. We made a very small change. We decided to tell people that they were going to be sent to the credit bureau if they didn't come into compliance. I want to tell you what happened with this very small initiative. We received a torrent of responses from people. Because we took the time to tell them what the consequences would be, it helped bring them into compliance. The result was that we gave them a chance: If they came into compliance, they did not get reported to the credit bureau. If any of you have had that experience, it is a disaster in terms of your future financial recording, your history, your credit history etc. It has ruined families. We made one small change and it made a huge difference. I want to say thank you to the people who talked to us about such a little change, because it has made a huge difference for so many people.

We are reaching out to our clients. We're telling them what the expectations are. New clients are contacted when they register. We call them now. We provide them with information to help them understand what our role is and what their role is. We review the court order with them, we answer questions and point out any problems that could delay the payment.

I want to say that when we reviewed the auditor's reports in the past about how long it took to get people hooked up and making those payments and receiving those payments, often it was because the application processes were done incorrectly. We didn't get all of the information we needed on the application form, and every time the application had to get sent back to the person, it would take an extra month to get that rolling again. A very simple phone call has eliminated a tremen-

dous amount of work for our staff so we can get on with enforcement, but more importantly, it has sped the process to get people the money they need in a more timely fashion. That was step one.

Our government is committed to helping families get the support they're owed. To do this, I know you remember our last budget, where we added \$40 million over four years to implement a new case management system. Provincial auditors have been talking about this since 1993. This system, with its supporting technology, will help transform the FRO and help track down and collect support payments that are in arrears. When you don't have a supporting computer system to support the case management system, what we have and have had is that every time someone makes a call to that office, they're talking to someone who doesn't know their file. So you can imagine, and the stories are often so complicated. They go on and on, and the next time you call, a week later, when it still hasn't been resolved, you've got to start from the very beginning again, talking about the entire file. How outrageous is that in terms of wasting staff time and people's time on the telephone—when you could get through on the telephone.

Let me just say, things are vastly improving, as we are moving the staff to work in teams, to look at case-specific—if they're out of jurisdiction, for example. There are a lot of types of files like that that are very similar, and they are being tasked toward a group of people within our offices who have that level of expertise. Things are just beginning to work. That was step two.

Step three is why we're here in the House today and why I'm standing before you with Bill 155. We said we've got to talk about what further enforcement is required to make this system work well, and, boy, did we hear from people who are in the system, who told us, "I know where she is, and she's not paying." "I know where he's working, and we can't get the money." We have heard it all, every one of us. It's never he or she; it's everybody. I have to tell you, it's extremely difficult if people don't want to pay. If there is one thing I hope this bill does, as we talk about enforcement measures, it's to get the word on the street that it's not OK to not pay the support you owe for your family, it is not OK to work under the table to get away from paying the support you owe your family. That's our message.

We know these enforcement tools are the last things we want to use. What I hope is that if the bill passes, we can say we have the enforcement and that will bring these people into compliance, because we need them to pay. We don't want to have to impose more jail time. If you're in jail, it's pretty hard to work and make your payments. We know that. That's clear. But we do think that, for example, when in the bill we extend what's available as jail time, it becomes much more serious if someone is going to go down that road. Unfortunately, we have had cases where the jail time was simply too limited to really impact on someone's life. Off they trotted to jail, did their time, and they walked out and still

hadn't paid what they owed. So to what end? Yes, we've got to make some strengthening here of the tools we have, and that's what this bill is going to do. They are long overdue.

If passed, our proposals would increase enforcement by:

- increasing the maximum jail term for failure to comply with court orders from 90 days to 180 days.

- ensuring that early release provisions under section 28 of the Ministry of Correctional Services Act do not apply to jail terms under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996. You're not getting out early if you get the jail time. That's the point. We hope that because it is going to be tough, people will bring themselves into compliance. We need people to do that.

- making it easier for the Family Responsibility Office to obtain a financial statement from a third party financially linked to a default payor. I hope this becomes very clear to the general public. If you are a parent, a work colleague, a neighbour, a friend, if we get the idea that there is some kind of financial link, you will have to bring forward information. Those days where someone may ask you to participate in hiding assets, for example, would not be available to you. We need make sure that the general public understands the seriousness of this. We all have stories from our local offices about these cases where people have the opportunity to pay and they find a way not to pay. That's wrong. Yes, we're trying to clip the wings of every opportunity that people may have to not pay.

- increasing FRO's powers to demand personal information about payors in order to locate them. So we're going to ask for more info to find them.

- expanding the number of organizations from which the FRO can demand information to include trade unions.

- reporting defaulting payors to professional licensing bodies.

- suspending defaulting payors' hunting and fishing licences.

- providing the FRO with the authority to post identifying information about defaulting payors on a public Web site. We're not ready for that element yet and I hope we never will be, because I hope that with everything we will be able to bring to bear if we pass this bill, we won't get to the point where we need that. But there would be legislated changes required, and they're in this bill as well.

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The first reaction to the bill when it was tabled was that it was fair, and we do want to make things fair. This would improve fairness by:

- allowing the FRO to cease enforcement of child support when a recipient doesn't respond to the FRO's inquiry about ongoing entitlement to support. For example, if the order suggested that the payor pay while the child was going to school but God and country knew that the child wasn't going to school any more, yet the recipient wasn't responding to inquiries from our office

and of course the payments were continuing to be taken even though everybody knew it was inappropriate, we will now have the opportunity to go in and make that kind of change without having to start a whole new circle through the courts again, at a great deal of cost, usually to the one side who is seeking to get that changed.

- allowing the FRO to enforce a lesser amount of support when the number of children entitled to support decreases. Again we are talking about the kind of detail that needs to be in an order that often isn't there, which allows for that kind of interpretation to be so different and which causes problems.

They would enhance efficiency by:

- allowing income sources to send payments to the FRO electronically.

- requiring mandatory direct deposits for recipients.

- allowing the Family Responsibility Office to automatically calculate and collect interest on arrears at a standard rate for all cases. The recipients will no longer have to do the calculations. I think many of us have had those kinds of calls, where the individuals were responsible for this kind of work and it simply wasn't working.

- allowing the FRO to create standard support order terms by regulation.

I'm proud to tell the Legislature that since we started making improvements at FRO—I've got to use this opportunity for a little bit of discussion about what good has been happening at the office.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Go right ahead.

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: Thanks so much. I know people are anxious to hear. I'm very proud of this.

In February 2004, we launched these initiatives and said these were the things that we were going to do:

FRO's new customer service unit has handled over 184,000 additional calls. This represents a 36% increase in the number of calls that our office is now handling.

More than 123,000 new personal identification numbers, PINs, have been issued to our clients. These PINs allow the clients to access more case information through the automated phone system 24/7. We think this is great, because everybody is busy. If it's 3 a.m. and that's the only time you have to call, you can call and use your PIN and get significantly more information about your file.

FRO has taken enforcement action on approximately 14,500 cases by tracing and locating people with information obtained by returned mail. Just by looking at the mail that came back to our office and finding the new addresses, we've managed to bring people into compliance, and that's the point of the office;

The credit bureau initiative—I mentioned earlier that one simple change: Tell people we're going to go to the credit bureau before we just go and ruin their entire financial history. That one initiative has collected over \$101 million.

I'm very proud of these people for these initiatives.

From April to December last year, the FRO collected \$95.3 million from defaulting payors as a result of

issuing over 6,700 notices of intention to suspend drivers' licences. In that same period, we also froze \$162,000 in lottery winnings from parents who owed support.

These are real and measurable results and ones that I can tell you I plan to be showing the Premier of Ontario, who gave us very simple instructions: Fix the FRO. We think we're a long way to getting there.

Over the years, the Ombudsman and the Provincial Auditor called upon the governments to improve enforcement measures, invest in new technology, support new case management processes and provide staff at the FRO with the tools they need to do their jobs. We believe we've recognized that change has been required, that we needed to invest in the FRO to ensure families received the support that they're entitled to. I have visited the FRO to see the work they do, I have seen the conditions that we've asked them to work in, and we have begun the improvements to make their jobs a little bit better and give them a little bit more support as well.

I'm proud to say that we have answered the call, firstly from the Premier, who said, "We're just going to do it," but as well from the Ombudsman and the Provincial Auditor. In fact, in January 2005, in *Voices for Children's Enabling Families to Succeed*, which was the last report of the Provincial Ombudsman, Clare Lewis said, "The current government ... have taken several encouraging steps which give me reason to believe that serious concern and attention are being given to address FRO deficiencies."

I have to say, I don't know who in this chamber is going to stand and vote against this bill, but I'm going to be looking for you and listening to what you have to say because this is important legislation, and some of it is so obvious that we just want to do it. But we have this legislative agenda to come in here and have debate and talk to the public about what we're doing so that we're certain to be doing it well. Every one of us in this House has been subjected to residents in our own hometowns who can't get through because we don't have the mechanisms to get that support coming into that family, and all of us, all of our communities, are paying the consequences when that one family doesn't get the support that it's due.

Every one of you in this House can do something about this. I would like to see this bill supported by every member of the House. I am calling on each and every MPP to support this bill. It's important. I hear from you through my MPP liaison office when you get calls about FRO. Now I'm placing before you this bill that will help us do the job for your constituents. So now, today, I expect your support for the bill. I thank you for the time today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I'm upset with the minister almost threatening across the chamber that we should all just fall into line and support this piece of legislation, which I find quite inadequate in

terms of what the public accounts committee discovered when they were looking at the Family Responsibility Office. Quite frankly, the Family Responsibility Office should take the model from British Columbia, where they have a response time of three to four minutes for a caller, as opposed to ours, which is 30 and 40 minutes, and we should follow in the footsteps of what they're doing in British Columbia.

But there's a difference between what they're doing in British Columbia and what they're doing here. The difference is that they have recognized that the Family Responsibility Office should stay out of the lives of people who don't want it in their lives, so that there is not an automatic referral but an optional referral to the Family Responsibility Office.

They also recognize that they shouldn't be a bank. What they do in British Columbia is make certain that the payment has gone from the payer to the payee. They don't have the money paid to the Family Responsibility Office and then write the cheque out a couple of weeks later. They don't go through that unnecessary administrative process.

Thirdly, the problem we have with our legislation is that we have made the Family Responsibility Office a social agency. They get involved in issues other than collecting money. They offer assistance to people, which may be a noble cause, but they don't concentrate on getting money from one to the other.

The other part is that the British Columbia system collects a lot more money than our system does.

1620

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I listened to the comments made by the minister. I just started reading the bill, so I am not going to speak in detail, but I would say that I think we all agree there are problems with the FRO, and the problems are many. That's not the argument. I thought she outlined fairly well some of the issues we have.

For example, in our constituency we see the extremes. Somebody is given an order to pay support to both of the children, and in some cases to the spouse, based on the ability of that person to pay. The person happens to be working at a mine somewhere and makes \$3,000 or \$4,000 a month, and the court orders a payment to be made for support to their children. But what happens is that the employer shuts down—I've seen that on a number of occasions—and now we've got a situation where the payer no longer makes \$4,000 a month and is actually living on unemployment insurance. But because that individual can't get to a court and can't get the support order changed, they find themselves in default and in arrears as a result, and because they end up in arrears, they end up losing their driver's licence. Now we're going to take away their fishing licence and we're going to report them to the professional associations or the unions.

I just say, hang on a second. Whoa. Maybe it's family law that we have to look at. I agree that if you're ordered to make a support payment for your kids, you should be

forced to pay it. I would hope that most people would do that on their own. But the basic issue is that we really need to rethink, in my view, how we approach this issue.

For example, I met with a lawyer just last Friday who specializes in this type of law, and I'll tell you, it left a lot to be desired at the end of that conversation about how both parties come out of these particular proceedings when they end up before the courts.

I would hope that maybe one thing we can do in this Legislature is to refer this whole matter to a standing committee to look at the issue itself: First of all, why is it so confrontational, and is there a way to make this system work? And at the end, if there is payment to be paid, people are forced to do so. But I think it goes a bit over the hill.

Ms. Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I want to applaud the minister for bringing this bill forward. It's long, long overdue. From the time I came into opposition in 1999, the biggest shock that my constituency office has had is dealing with Family Responsibility Office issues, many of which just have to do with ineffectiveness. It was almost as if it was dysfunctional in many areas.

I have to say to the member from Lanark-Carleton, I understand you suggest this has to be better. I was perplexed, in the four years that we tried to address this in opposition, to get the government to move on at least dealing with some of the issues that were coming before us. We made a number of presentations and wrote letters to the minister, and they fell on deaf ears. So I want to applaud the minister for bringing forward a bill, after getting feedback throughout the province, using that feedback as to what the specific issues were on the ground and incorporating it into this bill. As I said, it's long overdue.

This Family Responsibility Office impacts on so many people's lives—on children, on families who are going through a tremendously difficult time—the last thing they need is an office they have to be serviced by that is in its own archaic state of doing business. We're bringing it into the 21st century. The minister is certainly attempting to bring a fairness of approach and making the Family Responsibility Office able to provide the service that is much needed in this province.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I am happy to rise and speak to Bill 155. I have to say that I not only speak to this bill as a member of this House, I also speak to it as a former practitioner of family law. It really is so disheartening that when I advise my clients with respect to the legal process and procedures involved in a family matter, it was sometimes embarrassing for me. I'm going back six, seven, eight years now. I had to advise them, and many of them are immigrants from a different country, not conversant in English, "Yes, you have to be extremely patient; you have to spend money in seeking legal advice to retain a lawyer to go to court and get an order for support payments," and then also to advise

them, "You may or may not get your money after you've gotten the court order."

So, yes, enforcement is of the essence. What this bill does is that it really makes sure, inasmuch as it is possible and practically doable, that people who are obligated to pay under a court order have to pay. This is important because, as has been indicated by my colleague earlier, it impacts on the life of so many people, and oftentimes including children.

Although the minister indicated that this is actually the implementation aspect of a court order and that it does not deal with justice issues, let me tell you that most people do not understand and couldn't care less whether it's an enforcement or a justice issue. If they do not get the support payments they are entitled to, there is something wrong with the system and there is something unjust, as far as they are concerned. I certainly will support this bill and I hope this is only the first step of a number of steps to go.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the Minister of Community and Social Services. You have two minutes to reply.

Hon. Ms. Papatello: Thank you so much. I really was happy to give you an overview of what we are doing with this bill to bring people into compliance.

If I can say again, with the measures in this bill, the last thing we want to do is waste time, energy and money in having to use them. The reality is that we have to use them as a means to bring people into compliance so that we can say, "The jail time is really going to give you a bit of a crimp in your lifestyle. You really should come into compliance." The current amount of jail time isn't doing that. We want to be able to get information so we can find people. I believe that when you give people the opportunity, they will do the right thing. We have to send a message, "It's not OK not to pay support to your family; it's not OK. And if you are a friend, family or a neighbour, it's not OK to participate in these people not paying their support." We have got to change the way the public thinks about this. It's a responsibility.

I marvel at the comments from the member from Lanark-Carleton about opting out. You had eight years to do what you thought you should do with this area and you didn't do it. Secondly, it used to be in the Attorney General's ministry. You guys put it in ComSoc. and now you're talking about how the office is now a function of social issues. You guys took it out of the Attorney General. Do you know what? The point is, wherever it may be sitting, I appreciate the fact that it's in my ministry, because we're talking about real families here. The other thing I expect is that every single member of this House is going to stand up for families and get support for those families, and I'm going to watch how every single member votes on this particular bill, which I am particularly proud of.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I seek unanimous consent to defer our leadoff until our critic is available.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr. Yakabuski: Then I will continue on my allocated time. Thank you very much.

It's interesting, the comment made by the minister just a moment ago that she'll be watching very closely how each and every member votes. I hope that's not a threat. I'd like to have a chance to really consider the bill and all of its impacts and see whether it's actually going to accomplish anything before I decide how I'm going to vote.

Certainly, the number one priority always has to be that we must consider the children. We have to understand that whatever we do here has to be a positive thing for children because they have to be our number one priority. As a person who comes from a family of 14 children, I understand that. Before I forget, I just want to take this moment to wish my brother Mark and my brother Martin a happy 44th birthday today. They are celebrating a birthday today. Martin is a schoolteacher working with children all the time, so he also understands the importance of children.

1630

I want to talk a little bit about marriage, children and support and all of this kind of stuff, because that's what it all surrounds. One of the reasons we have a law like this is because, while I believe that when every single person takes their marriage vows they believe and hope and expect that that marriage is going to last until one of those spouses is no longer with us, the reality in this day and age is that not all marriages do last until death. We have to have a system in place where, when marriages do break down, there is a process by which children are protected, and in the case of spouses who were not wage earners or breadwinners, that they're protected as well. So we have to have a support payment system.

What I have seen over the years is that this whole system is built on turning parties against one another. When marriages break down, which they sometimes do, and unfortunately in our society they often do, there is usually one party that is more advantaged than the other in those marriages. That's not always the case but in most cases it is.

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): In most cases that's the case.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes. Thank you very much, member for Nepean-Carleton.

I've seen many occasions where the breakdown of the marriage is amicable, and then all of a sudden lawyers, the law and the system get entangled in the breakdown and that divorce. All of a sudden, what was going to be an amicable parting of the ways turns into a very acrimonious battle that is waged in and outside of the courts, one side doing everything it can to discredit the other so that one side looks terrible while they try to make themselves look like saints. These are the things we have in our courts that children have to live through and witness. At the end of this whole process, we're very fortunate sometimes if the children want to live with either one of

those parents, because the whole system is designed to drive a wedge between those parties and the children. The lawyers love to drive the system. Sometimes I don't think it's as much about the two parties in the divorce as it is about the lawyers wanting to make sure, "I'm not going to let that so-and-so from that firm beat me. We're going to win this thing and we're going to win it for my client." Because of that, we have all kinds of laws to enforce payments when marriages break down.

The bill we're beginning second reading debate on today has a number of changes to the act. If they can be shown to be positive for children and spouses who otherwise may be left disadvantaged, I think that's a good thing. But the question remains whether these things are actually positive or just more politicking on the part of this government. This government has brought in a lot of bills, sort of feel-good stuff to demonstrate to people, "We're very active. We really care. We're a compassionate, caring government that always wants to do the right thing, so we're going to bring in another piece of legislation." Some people might look at this and say, "Oh, that's a very positive thing." Then we have to ask ourselves, how realistic is it, can it actually work, or will the results actually mean anything?

Some of the things they're bringing in here, like "Maximum periods of imprisonment are increased from 90 to 180 days.... Information about default may be disclosed to entities such as professional organizations or licensing authorities"—let's just take, as an example, a person who is working, who has a good job and is making a good wage. Without wanting to be gender preferential or anything else, let's just say he's the male and his wife has stayed at home and raised the children and that he's making \$100,000 a year. Whatever happens, he's not making his payments. He should be making his payments. First of all, let's make that perfectly clear: Anybody who is obliged to make payments to support children and/or a spouse should in good conscience make every one of those payments without hesitation.

However, as the member for Timmins-James Bay alluded to, sometimes circumstances and the situation change. A person who might have been making \$100,000 one year may only be making \$50,000 the next, hypothetically speaking. So then what do we have to do? He's got to go back and try to get a new court order or changes made to the court order. The first thing that's going to happen is that old acrimony is going to rise again. The spouse is going to go to court and say, "No. We're living now on the payments we expected him to make when he made \$100,000 a year. We're not giving up a nickel." Of course the relationship between former spouses and the children and each of those spouses are put under all kinds of pressure and negative emotions and everything else. We wonder sometimes how we do survive these situations. So there's one circumstance, where the income changes dramatically and the one spouse is not able to make the same payments that were ordered under the original court order.

Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that we have a person who's defaulting not because they've lost their job or because they've had a reduced income—we don't know the circumstances surrounding it; they're just not paying. We send them to jail for 180 days. You know, there's a good chance that if you're in jail for 180 days, you might not have your job when you get out. So what have we accomplished there? If we're thinking about the children and thinking about the spouse, "Yeah, let's put the son of a so-and-so in jail for 180 days," so when he comes out he's on welfare and they're getting nothing—boy, that was a really good idea. That's helpful for the kids. That's going to help them with their college fund—on welfare now.

Sometimes we have to ask ourselves, is it just about more laws and more rules and regulations or are we actually trying to help people and change the difficult situation in which some people are being raised today because of marriage breakdowns and the like? Sometimes we really have to take a good look at ourselves and ask, is it really about the people or is it just about us in here? If that's what it comes down to sometimes, I think we need to write less law and do a better job of enforcing the law we've got.

I want to talk about a couple other things with regard to children today. The children's ministries are always all about children; if it's not about children, then we should just shut them down, right? I know each party had five minutes today to speak about His Holiness Pope John Paul II. Having an opportunity to speak today, I would like to take the opportunity to speak about his love for children and how the welfare of children all around the world meant so much to him.

1640

I want to say at this time that I was particularly impressed and moved by the pontiff's strength and the willingness to bear his cross in the face of the tremendous physical adversity he faced in the last number of years. While it must have been absolutely excruciating just to function on a daily basis in his office, never once did he even suggest that he should renege on those responsibilities and pass the torch prior to the time that the good Lord called him home. I think for Catholics around the world and, indeed, for all Christians around the world, he has served as a tremendous inspiration, and we will all remember him very well. And of course, his love for children—we cannot forget his love for children.

I was talking about my brother Mark a little earlier, who is having his 44th birthday today, as well as my brother Martin. Mark had the opportunity to have an audience with the Pope at the Vatican some years ago, and it was certainly one of the high points of his life to have had that audience with His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

Talking about children, I remember that the Minister of the Environment was talking about how we've got to deal with these water regulations, that they have to be different at some of these children's camps because children are more susceptible to bacteria than adults. Since

we're talking about children today, it's a good opportunity to talk about some of the problems.

I do compliment the minister for setting up the advisory council. The report has come back; we've yet to hear from the minister as to what parts of that report they're going to act on or entrench.

What is interesting about water is that you notice that today there is no ice in our water. There is no ice in our water because there was a water main break somewhere on Wellesley or Queen's Park, wherever, somewhere around there today. We've got no water to drink in the House, so they're bringing us in bottled water. It's kind of ironic, because I've never really been that high on the water in this building for drinking. But I've never had a problem drinking the water out of anybody's well up in my riding. If you go to Roger Imhof's camp or Gunther Borck's restaurant, there's no problem drinking the water there—very good water in rural Ontario—yet we want to bring in all kinds of regulations to make it harder for those people to dispense that water.

But talking about children, when you're at a children's camp—or have you ever had your children at a lake in the summertime? For anybody here who has children, if you've ever had them swimming, have you noticed that when children swim under the water, they're drinking the water all day long? If they're in the water, they're drinking the water—right out of the lakes. I wouldn't put my kids into Lake Ontario to drink the water, but I've got no problem in Paugh Lake or Kamaniskeg Lake or Trout Lake or any of the lakes up in my riding. When they go swimming in those lakes, no problem: The kids have never been sick and they're drinking the water all day long. But we're going to treat all the wells up there and we're going to treat all the rural water because somehow it's not drinkable. I've never seen a kid sick from swimming in the lakes yet.

It's kind of ironic, when we promote this province from a tourism point of view, that we send all the stuff out to other jurisdictions talking about how good and clean and pristine the water is here, but when we're talking in our own province, it's, "Don't drink it. We got to treat it first." It's kind of strange.

We are talking about children, because this bill is about family responsibilities and how it relates to children. The children out there are always asking me those questions: "What's wrong with the water? We drink it all the time and our well is good and the lakes are clean. Why does the Ministry of the Environment want to force us to treat it and chlorinate it and everything else?" They've got a lot of questions.

Anyway, back to the bill. The Minister of Community Safety and the Minister of Economic Development had an announcement today that the Amber Alert notification program is going to be extended to lottery terminals across the province. Of course, this is about children. The abduction of children is a heinous crime that just turns my stomach when I read and hear about it. So what are they going to do? They're going to extend these notices to lottery terminals. I have bought lottery tickets. I do

from time to time buy lottery tickets, and I think probably most members in this House, most members of the audience and most people out there in TV land probably do buy lottery tickets from time to time. But I wonder if they've ever actually gone behind the counter and looked at the screen. I don't think they do that.

I'm wondering, is this just another one of the government's, "Look at us. Look how good we are. Look how wonderful and caring we are and how much difference we're going to make in the province of Ontario. We're now going to extend this to lottery terminals"? Other than the person selling the lottery tickets, I'm not sure who's going to see that. I guess I ask myself, is anybody going to see an Amber Alert come across their lottery screen, call the boss and say, "Sorry, I quit. I'm going to have to go out and tell the people all about what I saw on the lottery screen"? They're in the business of selling lottery tickets. They're not going to be standing up there and saying to everybody who comes to buy a lottery ticket, "Just a minute. Before I sell you these tickets, would you mind if I give you the information on the child who's been abducted?"

We're not trying to minimize the terrible things that parents, extended family and all others go through if a child is abducted, but we're not going to have this government stand here and tell us that they're actually doing something and really concerned about it themselves, because what they did today is, quite frankly, ridiculous. It's not going to accomplish anything. It's just another one of their little mom-and-apple-pie, "Let's tell everybody how wonderful a job we're doing and how the world is going to be so much better as a Liberal world," when in fact it's not making any difference at all. But it would be interesting to know what kind of costs are involved in that.

If they can extend that kind of information on lottery terminals—there are probably other, more worthwhile places that they can do so, and I must say, I have spoken to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, who has been very helpful and very supportive in this—it would certainly be good to see if, with technology today, we could have Ontario health cards issued at licensing bureau offices in rural Ontario, because people drive such long distances. In my riding, for example, if you live in Whitney, you have to go to Pembroke, which is 130 kilometres; from Whitney to Pembroke for a senior citizen to get a new OHIP card issued. We have the technology and the ability to do that in Killaloe. That's something the government should be doing to provide services to the people of Ontario. It's really meaningful, it's important to rural Ontario and it would be a big help.

I'm not suggesting that it is a bad thing to put the Amber Alert on lottery terminals, but it's not going to accomplish much.

But let's get back to the bill. You'd be surprised how fast 20 minutes goes. I honestly think that the clock ticks faster when I'm speaking. I don't know why I say that, but rarely does it appear that I have enough time to get

my points across. Unfortunately, I have run out of time. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It's always a pleasure to comment on the statements made by my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He talked about a great many things—about families and breakdowns and children with problems—but I think the point that he most eloquently made in those 20 very short minutes was the whole question about the penalty of someone going to jail. This law purports to change the major penalty from 90 days to 120 days. He asked a very real question, a question that I think all of legislators in this Legislature must ask themselves before this bill is passed into law: Will the change from 90 to 180 days affect the legislation? Will it assist the families and, particularly, will it assist the children, or will the fact that someone who was incarcerated for a period of 180 days and loses his or her job actually be a detriment to those families? It is a very real question, and a question which I intend to speak to later.

1650

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke raised this issue, and I think it's one that must be dealt with. At the outset, I have to tell you that I believe that simply raising the penalty may not in and of itself do what the government intends to do. It may or may not force a recalcitrant person who does not want to give money to their family, to their children, to do it. The penalty is not the issue, because what happens, as he so rightly said, is that the family breaks down. The difficulty exists between individuals, not with governments. It is saying, "I'm not going to give any money to X. I'm mad at X. I don't want to see them prosper in any way. I don't want to contribute to their lifestyle." That's the real problem here.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 155, which is An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act.

When I was first elected, I took over from a very good friend of yours, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Gary Carr, who was the former member for Oakville. He was also the former Speaker of the House. I took over all of his office. I took over the furniture—I changed the sign out front—and I also got a lot of good advice from his staff. It was a very smooth transition; it was a very good transition. They told me at the time, "The most phone calls you're going to get in this constituency office are on FRO." I didn't know what FRO was.

Mr. Baird: Then the birth certificate fiasco happened.

Mr. Flynn: And then the birth certificate fiasco that was left behind by the previous government just added to that. But the advice was good advice, because that's exactly how it worked out. When the phone did start to ring in our office, it was people who were looking for increased enforcement on the Family Responsibility Office.

I am very, very pleased to see this come before us today. It was first introduced, of course, last year, in

December. The minister, I think, has put forward the first substantive legislative amendments to this act—long overdue. The previous government had eight years to do it and simply didn't act. It calls for increased enforcement, it's going to improve the fairness of the legislation and it's going to allow us, in some cases, even to enforce a lesser degree of support when the number of children entitled to support decreases, which I think is a progressive and fair move. It's also going to enhance the efficiency of the office, which for years has suffered some problems.

I'm very, very pleased to see this come forward, based on the information I received from the previous Speaker on how we would be spending our time at the constituency level. We know that this is going to help us and our constituency staffs in all the ridings, I think, both opposition and government alike. It's going to help us all do our job.

Mr. Sterling: You know, nothing could be further from the truth that the former government didn't do anything with regard to FRO. In fact, we took the biggest single step since FRO was created in 1987-88, and that was the implementation of withholding or suspending a person's driver's licence if they didn't meet their obligations. As a result, between 1997 and 2002, under the former government, payments increased by 50%. I challenge the present government: You increase payments by 50% from the present levels and I'll say thank you to you, because you're not going to do it with this piece of legislation. There are some improvements here, but it's not a big deal. It's not a big deal at all.

When we were in government, we asked for a study of the British Columbia model. The British Columbia model for their Family Responsibility Office was getting better results than we were here in Ontario. The former government spent \$500,000 on a report—a report which sits with the Minister of Community and Social Services and which she refuses to release to the public.

I'd like to see that report so that we can fix this bill up, so that we can make the Family Responsibility Office even better than it is, or would be under this bill. This bill just tinkers with the edges. It doesn't really offer very substantial changes, as we did under the Harris government when we increased payments to parents for children by 50%.

Mr. Baird: I want to congratulate the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke on his remarks. I also want to congratulate Sharon van Son, the director of the FRO. Despite a lot of complaints, she and her team work hard and do a very good job to the best of their ability. This is not an easy task.

I want to mention what the member for Lanark-Carleton said. This is the type of bill which probably should go for public hearings for a good number of weeks, to allow MPPs to come up with other ways. There's no doubt the minister has come forward with some suggestions to try to improve the system. I'll tell you what should really happen: We should have about a dozen of the constituency office staff, representative of

all three parties, come and advise the member. We should have a dozen clients of FRO come and meet with the committee, even in closed session, and tell them about their experiences, because there are a lot of concerns out there and we might find ways to make this even better.

One of the challenges we have is that a court order is virtually unenforceable in Ontario. If someone refuses to give money, not a heck of a lot happens. You have people who actually will quit their job rather than pay the money to their ex-spouse. They'll flush the money down the toilet. I had one woman come to me and say, "My ex-husband is buying all this expensive furniture and doesn't have enough money to pay me," and I said, "Prove it." She pulls out a receipt signed by him for 25 grand worth of furniture, yet we can't get the courts to enforce it. There is too much dispute between who has the jurisdiction. Is it the province? Is it the federal government? Can we interfere with the courts? All these parties should be brought together to lead to a better system that helps some really desperate people.

But we should also be honest with people. The minister—whatever minister in the future or whatever government—should be honest enough to say, "If the guy dies and doesn't have any money, you're never going to get it back." We'll do the very best job we can with the powers that the Legislature has given us to deliver, but every piece of law has its limitations, and I think we should be honest about that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Yakubski: I appreciate the comments of the member for Beaches-East York, the member for Oakville, the member for Lanark-Carleton and the member for Nepean-Carleton. They have all spoken about different aspects of the bill.

I want to comment on some of the things that the member for Lanark-Carleton said. I agree with him that between September 1997 and March 2002, the previous government suspended almost 16,000 driver's licences. So for the member for Oakville to say that they did nothing to help enforce support payments is totally false. The amount collected went from \$368 million to \$555 million, which is a 50% increase, as he said.

One of the things that I keep coming back to is that it's always the children who lose out. What is a shame is that lawyers get rich and children get screwed. In the whole system, we've got lawyers fighting it out about who is going to win. They are as much concerned about themselves as they are about their clients in these cases, as far as I'm concerned, making sure they are the victors. If all the money billed by lawyers with regard to support payments and child support, where children are involved—if we could just say, "Sorry, boys, that's going to the children, and you're going to have to do this pro bono. This is going to be free, because this is a service you guys should be providing to children in Ontario." We know that's not going to happen, but it is a shame when you see the millions and millions of dollars in fees collected to tear people apart as opposed to bringing them

together, to take money out of children's hands and pockets as opposed to helping them. That's the shame, and that is something that should be addressed.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Brad Duguid): Further debate? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must say you look pretty good in that chair yourself. I have the lead, and I'm not sure how much of the hour I'm going to use.

This is a topic that I think is near and dear to all of our hearts. Those of us who have been legislators in this province for a while know that in our constituency offices, probably the number one or number two call we get on all of the issues combined has to do with the FRO, the Family Responsibility Office. We know there are many people out there hurting because the law does not work for them. Particularly, it does not work for the children of this province.

In fact, this is not a new phenomenon in Ontario; this is a phenomenon that has been going on for many years. I don't think I could say it any better than the former Ombudsman of Ontario. I'd like to quote what was taken from a CP report—it's mostly quotations from Mr. Clare Lewis, and it was reported by Keith Leslie in 2004—because it sets out in a nutshell exactly what we're talking about today and about how this problem is not just a problem of today but a problem for all times. It is a problem that goes back years and years and seems, to some at least, to be insurmountable. I quote from this CP report, 2004. The entire thing is a quotation, and I'll try to indicate where Mr. Lewis was the actual speaker, starting immediately. He said:

“A good many spouses and children are not receiving money they need, and they are vulnerable,” Lewis said as he released his annual report. “I have great concerns about the impact on single parents with children who often float into poverty.

“There's been a failure to enforce and a failure to stop enforcement.”

The story goes on to read:

“Lewis blames most of the problems at the FRO on the fact that the agency still doesn't have a computer system able to support the payment program and case management, a problem he said the government promised to fix as far back as 2001.

“Well, that's then and this is now and it hasn't yet occurred,” said Lewis. “There's human error and there's also technological inadequacy.

“One of my greatest disappointments in my term of office is that after almost five years, I'm still unable to report to the public that the FRO has implemented a more efficient computer system and improved its service delivery. I'm encouraged that it finally appears some positive movement has been made in this significantly underserved area,” said Lewis. “However, I have no doubt that my successor will be reporting here next year and the year after on matters to deal with the Family Responsibility Office.”

End of quote; end of story.

Mr. Lewis said it all: This is a problem that has been going on year after year and that it would be reported on when he was gone—the year he left, and the year after that. And here we are talking about the exact same issue.

We have a bill before us today, Bill 155, which purports to do something about it, which purports to increase penalties, which purports to solve some of the problems of the Family Responsibility Office. I will tell you that this bill, if it only did that, would make me very happy.

A number of years ago, my colleagues—they weren't my colleagues then, but they are now—the member from Niagara Centre and the member from Nickel Belt went into a Family Responsibility Office. Some of the old-timers might remember that. There was a kerfuffle here in the Legislature, because they went in unannounced and saw boxes piled upon boxes—hundreds, if not thousands, of files that were not being acted upon—in those offices, while families waited weeks, months or sometimes even years for action to be taken.

You will remember that they got a lot of people angry in this Legislature. In fact, some of the media were a little bit angry at what they had to do too, because they had to overstep the bounds of what it meant to be a parliamentarian in order to draw attention to the problems of the FRO.

We have a bill here today that hopefully will do something about those problems, but I'm not holding my breath a great deal. You see, last year, in 2004, the Ombudsman's office alone reported that there were 1,467 complaints made about the FRO in Ontario. The only number of complaints that surpassed that, that went higher than that, that eclipsed that, was from the penal institutions, where prisoners complained about the treatment they were receiving. You see, 1,467 people—1,467 families—have seen that the FRO does not meet their needs. These are not the families that simply phone up and can't get through the line, which hundreds of them can't do; these are not the families that can't get their payments, which thousands of them are not receiving; these are not the families that have problems with individuals working within the system or even with their spouses. These are families who take the unprecedented step of going to the Ombudsman of Ontario to complain about a government program. This is the second most complainable program that we as a government run in this province. And it is one that is begging and crying out to be fixed.

Now I ask you, what is going to fix it? Is this bill going to fix it? I don't think so. Is it going to hurt the process? I don't think that either. There are two things that need to be done and need to be done right away before this process can be fixed, before it can work for the poor children and the poor families of this province. The first and most important one is that we have to recognize as a Legislature that it is important, it is mandatory, it is the single most important thing that we can do, to adequately staff the Family Responsibility

Office. There have been cutbacks throughout the civil service over a number of years, and the responsibilities of the individuals working in that office are much more profound than they were five years or 10 years ago. It is their responsibility to ensure that families are getting the money they deserve; it is their responsibility to track down deadbeat parents; it is their responsibility to use the courts; it is their responsibility to use the system, whether it cuts off a driver's licence or forces someone to make amends or to change their way of life. It is their responsibility, and there are not sufficient workers to do that.

The most important job they have, I would say without question, is that there should be, and there is not today, a dedicated caseworker to monitor the individual support orders. There may be civil servants, and they may be there, but they are not hugely well trained, or at least not trained enough. And there needs to be a dedicated caseworker to monitor the individual support orders in each and every given case. If a caseworker has 100 families that he or she looks after, then they should have 100 families that they look after, and it should be their responsibility to make sure that Mrs. Jones or Mr. Smith, or whoever the case is, is being adequately represented before the courts and that the orders forced upon the recalcitrant spouse, the person who has gone away, the person who was not paying his or her fair share, is being ordered and it is being done. That is not contained in this bill. In fact, we will not know probably until the time of the budget later this month or early next month whether there are additional funds for the FRO or for government offices in general, or whether this government is bound and intent—as the Minister of Finance said last year when reading out his budget and his bill and the finance prognostication for the province of Ontario; then we're going to know whether in fact there are going to be cuts to the civil service. If there are further cuts to this particular department, which I am worried about—and even if there are no cuts but they are flat-lined, which I am nearly equally worried about—this bill and what is contained in this bill is not going to help the poor children and the families of Ontario.

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The second thing which is not contained in this bill, and which I have to sometimes smile at, is that we live in a technological, wonderful world. We live in a world of mass communications and of computers, where you can buy microchips that would amaze somebody from even 20 years ago.

I had an opportunity the other day to go into a local computer store to buy a little chip, and I can't even remember what it was called. It was for a member of my staff, and it could not have been any more than about two centimetres long by one centimetre wide. You pushed it into a computer and it allowed you to take home the information without taking home the computer. I forget what it was called, but it contained 256 megabytes. It was two centimetres by one centimetre. I remember, when I was a boy, me and my Commodore 64, because that was

the first computer that was sold at home that had 64, and it was a big, big machine. Today it all fits in one centimetre by two centimetres. You can take it home, you can carry it around your neck and it can contain enough information that you couldn't possibly amass it in a day or two days or a week. It only cost a few dollars. It was amazing to me, the cost of that.

But here we have an FRO that has an antiquated, ridiculous, foolish system that cannot keep up with the families of this province. We invest a lot of money and a lot of time and lawyers' work developing a new bill. Here is the bill before us, and it contains lots of provisions. But unless there is an adequate computer system that will allow the workers in that particular ministry to do their job, this is, I would suggest to all of you, for naught. If they cannot access the information rapidly and correctly, if they cannot do their job—if there are not sufficient of them to do it and if they have a computer system such as the one they're using, which Mr. Lewis and the Ombudsman and all of the audits have said has been a terrible computer system for a number of years—then I am afraid that this legislation, no matter how well intentioned, is not going to work. We have been told that that computer system is possible in the year 2006, that sometime toward the end of next year, if there are sufficient monies in the budget, if there is the wherewithal to do it from the government side and if the tenders are right, it might be available.

I have to smile and chuckle a little, though, because one of the problems is that the government over there is starting to tender the new computer, starting to look at RFPs on how the computer can be developed and who is going to develop it. One of the firms that is leading in bidding for that computer contract is a firm called Accenture. Members of this Legislature will remember Accenture. Accenture was the one that developed the computers for those who are on social assistance or Ontarians with disabilities. That same system is so faulty, so useless, that it could not even calculate a 3% increase when this government, the present government, tried to give a 3% increase to ODSP and general welfare recipients.

This is the company that is one of the lead bidders, Mr. Minister. I would hope you would be smarter than to allow them to continue. I know you may have a legal obligation, but if a computer company is bidding on a contract and their past performance as a computer company is that they cannot even calculate a 3% increase based on such small, little amounts as the \$900 a month that an ODSP recipient might be getting—even in my head, that's \$27 a month. I can do it in my head, but their computer cannot do it. I would suggest that you ought not to be entertaining an idea that that is something that could be allowed in your budget, particularly when it's going to cost such a great amount of money.

Now, dealing with a great amount of money, why is this government introducing this bill at this time? Is it for an altruistic reason? Perhaps. Is it because you think that poor children need to be helped? Perhaps. Or is it

because, I would suggest, to be a little bit blunt for a moment, this government spends some \$201 million per year on general welfare assistance that could otherwise be paid for or should otherwise be paid for, by those who are not paying for their own families? I would suggest that this is the real nub of the issue.

I believe that every single parent has an obligation to look after his or her children, so I have no compunction and no problem with saying that this government should try everything in its power to lessen the \$201 million they're having to pay in general welfare because parents are not paying for their children in terms of support. Having said that, I would hope that this is not instead of the \$201 million that they're paying in general welfare, but this would be on top of the monies they would get from their parents, because certainly the amount of money being paid to people on general welfare, the amount of money being paid to people on Ontarians with disabilities, is not satisfactory in a province like Ontario. It forever limits them to live below the poverty line. It forever limits them in the scope and the abilities they have to develop in a province like Ontario.

We have this new legislation, and what does this new legislation purport to do? As I read it and tried to look through it, it appeared to me that there were eight significant aspects under the aegis of enforcement that it intends to do. I'd like to deal with each of them, giving kudos to a few and asking a few questions on others.

The first one has to do with the jail terms. I would question the government very strongly whether in fact the doubling of the jail term, from 90 days to 180 days, is in the best interests of this legislation, is in the best interests of the tens of thousands of children who are going to rely on their parents to come across with some money for child support. If you double the term, then I would suggest to you that you have to be prepared to house people in penal institutions for twice as long as you are doing at the moment. There are not many people who go to jail, but from those who do go to jail, I would suggest that the overwhelming majority of them are people who choose to go to jail. They can pay the money, but in a family dispute, in a family where one of the spouses is removed from the familial home, in a family where one of the spouses has limited or no access to his or her children, then often there is a bitterness that pervades all of this. The bitterness pervades to the point that some people would actually prefer to go to jail than pay the money, and whether that time period is 90 days or 180 days, they will choose to do it.

Just going back a little bit to my youth, I remember I had a friend who every once in a while would choose to go to jail rather than pay his parking tickets. He would amass 80 or 90 of these parking tickets and he would go down to the Don Jail for a night or two nights. He would spend a night or two nights in the Don Jail, then they would let him go, and those 80 or 90 tickets would be gone. Most of us would think, "Who would want to spend a night or two nights in the Don Jail?" So we would pay our tickets. But to that individual, the choice

he made was to do that: to park wherever he wanted, take the weekend off, spend it in jail and do his time rather than pay the tickets. This is not that much different from some members of our society who would choose to go to jail rather than pay their spouse or the children of their spouse what was due to them. We have people who will do this and will say this and will take the risk of going to jail, whether it be for 90 days or 180 days.

What is accomplished by doing this? Is it a deterrent? I would suggest that the criminal deterrent here is probably far less than someone who shoplifts in a store. They are far more worried about deterrence because that is a level of greed. This is a level, I would suggest to you, probably of hatred and it clouds the judgment and it clouds what people will do. To raise the time from 90 to 180 days may in fact be counterproductive. I will guarantee you that in the majority of cases, if you are in jail for 180 days or any significant period at all, your job will not be waiting for you when you come out. In fact, what you have is that not only are you incarcerated, not only did the family not get any money, but we as a province have to pay the approximately \$225 per day it costs to keep somebody incarcerated. At the end, we'll probably have to pay that person general welfare because they don't have a job to return to.

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The second problem, and it's more minor than the first that I saw here, is that this bill does not allow for the early release of someone who is sentenced to jail time. This is very unusual, because almost all criminal activity covered by the Criminal Code, and in fact almost every piece of legislation either from this province or from the federal government, allows people to have parole following conviction, allows them out usually after one third of the sentence, sometimes two thirds of the sentence. This bill will make an exception and will keep people in for the entire length of the term that has been put forward by a judge. It does not allow for someone on good behaviour to be let out early and in fact makes the penalty even more severe than a penalty that one might get, as an example, if one got 90 days for shoplifting, although that's probably kind of high; you would get 90 days. You would probably be out after 60 days and you would be back on the street. In this one here, if you got 90 days, you'd be in for the full 90 days. There would be no time for good behaviour. In fact, there would be no real reason for a person in the jail to have or to show any good behaviour or remorse, because they're not going to get out. I think it's counterproductive to the entire criminal proceedings system.

You should you look very carefully at this: Is the person sentenced under this act any different from a person sentenced for criminal activity? I would suggest that this is more of an emotional crime. This is a crime brought on usually by family breakdown. I think you ought not to treat these people, if convicted and sentenced, in a different way than you would treat someone who was convicted under the Criminal Code.

The third element that you propose to do here is to be able to take financial statements from third parties. I

really don't have any problem with this; I think this is a pretty good thing. You should be able to take financial statements from third parties when and if called upon. I think it's a venue the government should follow, and follow carefully.

The fourth one, though, is to demand personal information from outside sources in an attempt to find those who are not living up to their familial obligations. I'm not sure how much of a problem I have with this, because I'm not sure where the government intends to go with this. Certainly it is easy for the majority of government people to find all of us. There are those who can go on the lam, there are those who can run away, there are those who can hide at least in the short term without being caught, but the majority of people, law-abiding people in this province, some of whom would have family breakdowns as well, would not find it that easy to run away. You would have to literally give up your credit cards, give up your driver's licence, your fishing licence and your job. You would have to literally start a new identity, move to other municipalities and do something of a complete lifestyle change if this kind of recommendation would be necessary.

I have some very real difficulties with governments invading privacy. I'm not sure how far you're going, so I don't know whether I'm opposed or not opposed, but I do want to raise the flag. How much are you going to invade personal privacy in order to find people who owe families money? We live in an age when we all fear Big Brother. We live in an age when we know how easy identity theft is. We live in an age when we just wonder how much government needs to know. There is nothing in here that limits that. There need to be some very real safeguards to ensure that innocent people are not hurt.

There is information here which is being allowed to be collected from trade unions. I found this a little bizarre. Most people who belong to a union work in a unionized factory or location where everybody knows them.

Mr. Baird: They tend to.

Mr. Prue: Yes, they tend to. Almost all of them—

Mr. Baird: I'd say 100%.

Mr. Prue: Not 100%. I'm going to get to those who don't.

Mr. Baird: Most people who are unionized work in a unionized environment.

Mr. Prue: Yes, in a unionized environment, in a factory, in a location where they know everybody.

I certainly know that when I worked in a unionized factory those many years ago, we knew everybody of the 200 or 300 people who worked there. In fact, you didn't need to find out any information about them. There was Joe or Al or whoever it was who worked over on the next machine. Everybody in the place knew them.

I'm not sure how getting information from trade unions is going to help, with the possible exception of those who work in the construction industry, where they work from one house to another house, from one company to another company, with subcontracting. If that's what you're attempting to do, then it should be very specific. If you're going to ask every single trade union

to keep records on its members and where they live and where they work and all the information you're going to need, I think that is far too great an onus to put upon trade unions, especially when that same information is already available for 90% or 95% of the workers from the employers themselves. The trade unions are voluntary organizations of which people are members. It certainly makes very limited or no sense to me that where the information is available from another source, you would tap into a voluntary organization.

I thought this was a good one: that the professional licensing bodies be notified—not that they do anything. But if you're a lawyer or a doctor or a chiropractor or whoever and you have a licensing body and you haven't been paying your money, your association will now be notified. Nothing much will happen to you under this legislation, but the body will be notified. So I guess the College of Chiropractors will know that one of its chiropractors or one of its chiropodists hasn't been paying their family bills. I'm not sure what that's going to do, except if it's meant to embarrass.

I looked at number 7 too, which was to take away the hunting and fishing licences, and I had a bit of a chuckle. You cannot possibly believe that that is going to do anything to make people pay up the family bills, to pay for their children. You cannot believe that somebody is going to think this is some kind of punishment. Quite frankly, most hunters and fishermen I know, if they break this law and their hunting or fishing licence is taken away, will go out and hunt and fish without a licence. That's what I think is going to happen. You are going to invite them to go out and break another law or else just choose not to go hunting and fishing. It depends on how much it means to the individual. But I cannot imagine that this is going to put one more dollar into one more family in this province.

The last one, the eighth one, is the public Web site. Here I have to caution you. You put the names on a public Web site and say that an individual has not been paying his or her money, put it out there for all the world to see. What if you are in error? I ask you to be very, very careful about putting an individual's name on a public Web site, an individual who has not been found guilty in a court, an individual who may have paid off his or her obligations, an individual for whom, under your own bill, the right steps have not been followed by the bureaucrats. If you put his or her name on there, you are inviting lawsuits and you are inviting some very real trepidation for innocent people. So before it goes on a public Web site, I think a lot more work has to be done than what we are finding in this particular bill. It is a dangerous proposal, and one that I think needs to have a lot more work done on it.

1730

We know why the government is doing this. We know the importance of the bill. We know that the government is looking at between \$1.2 billion and \$1.6 billion in monies that are outstanding, that need to go to poor families and to poor children to ensure that they are

living with at least some modicum of comfort. We know that is there, and we know that things have to be done to redress it.

However, without the computer system—and there's nothing in here to deal with new computers; no government statements saying that it will be contained within this budget year or the next budget year—without a dedicated caseworker to monitor the individual support orders, quite frankly the bill does not do everything it is supposed to do.

There are a couple of other small points that I want to raise about the bill. The bill does do some other good things that I want to commend the government for. In terms of efficiency, I've tried to look through to see what some of the efficiencies are, and there are some good ones. It allows income sources to send payments to the FRO electronically.

We live in a technological society where you can transfer money immediately, where monies can be taken from banks, from trust companies, monies can be taken from around the world; they can be transferred in a matter of seconds from one bank account to another. It seems to me to make eminent good sense that the money be allowed to be transferred from the payer to the payee—that is, from a spouse to his or her family—that the money simply gets deposited in the account, that the money is transferred immediately from, as an example, a place of employment, if there is a similar provision to the garnishee.

Why this has not been done in the past, I have no idea. So I commend you. It's a technological innovation that most people can accept. If the money is taken directly from a person's source of income, then they never see it. It seems that is a justifiable way to make sure it gets to the right source as soon as possible.

The second efficiency is to require mandatory direct deposit for the recipients. Again, I don't have any problem with this. It is important, if that is the chosen method, that there be a mandatory deposit made to a person's bank account, a spouse's bank account to look after the children, so that they would know that each and every month, on the first or the 15th or whenever the date was, the money was coming in, and could immediately report when and if it did not come in.

I know of far too many cases in my own office where the money is supposed to come in, and you get the same old refrain: "Where's my cheque?" "It's in the mail." "Where's my cheque?" "It's coming. I haven't had a chance to go to the bank." I'm sure all of you members in this House have heard the same statements I have heard in my office so many times. The spouse who doesn't want to pay comes up with an excuse: is unable to get to the bank, is unable to mail the cheque, is unable to do whatever they're supposed to do. Mandatory direct deposit from employers will certainly alleviate much of that problem.

The third efficiency is to allow the FRO to collect arrears owing to an assigned representative. An example that I looked at was the social assistance program from other support programs Ontario has agreements with.

People move from province to province, from community to community. It is essential, it is important, that some agency take direct control. But before you have the Ontario government, the office of the FRO, taking direct control, you have to do something which you have not done as a government. You have to do something which the previous government did not do, and which I don't believe any government has done for a number of years; that is, you are going to have to increase the complement of people who work there. I will say it again and again: The problem with the FRO is manifold. Part of it is the legislation, which may be dealt with in part today, but the major problem is the fact that there aren't enough civil servants properly trained and able to do the job. If you're going to have an agreement that allows this to be done, it means nothing if there is no one there who is capable and willing and able to support it. So I go back to the point again: You're going to have to have additional resources for this program to work.

It says, "Allowing the FRO to automatically calculate and collect interest on arrears at a standard rate for all cases." This seems to me to be pretty fair. I was shocked when I found out recently that the recipient has to calculate what they think the interest is. They have to do all the calculations of how much is owed. Then it has to go before one of the people working for the FRO, and inevitably, probably, to the courts, whether or not it's fair. It seems to me that if there's a standard program that can be calculated on a computer, which is eminently better than you use for welfare recipients, then it's pretty standard to indicate 2% or 3% or 4% or whatever the going rate is that has been established.

This bill will also allow the FRO "to create standard support order terms by regulation" and, last but not least, to confirm that the FRO is a law enforcement body for the purpose of the privacy legislation. This is fundamental. This has to be done. The FRO has to be included among law enforcement agencies for a whole range of reasons that deal particularly with privacy.

We have a bill here that may be a pretty good bill. We have a bill, though, that is going to necessitate a great deal of government money. It's going to necessitate a new computerized system, the training of staff and the implementation of the laws that you have put forward. If all of those things happen in conjunction with the bill, then it will be a good day for poor people in this province, because to be poor in this province usually involves having a family in which both parents are not present. You will see that the majority of poor children in this province come from single-parent families. The majority of poverty in this country is where there has been a marriage breakdown.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to talk just a little bit outside the bill for a minute—then I'll get back to it—in terms of what one can expect for these families. This bill will hopefully find additional money. If all this bill is going to do is find the money from parents to pay so that the government in turn does not have to pay welfare, I don't think you're going to be doing much to

alleviate poverty, any more than you attempt to alleviate poverty by clawing back the money you give to your poorest citizens who are on general welfare. That is done to the children of this province today and that is what will be done if this bill is passed without a government commitment to take the funds that are currently being spent, some \$200 million, and give those back to the very same poor people to make sure that the children have a better life. It is no different to get the money from the parents if you are not going to have the government live up to its part.

In conclusion—and it looks like I'm not going to use my full hour—I want to say again that the bill, if implemented, has some difficulties, but they are not insurmountable. The enforcement aspect is a good aspect, although I cannot agree that putting someone in jail for double the length of time that you're suggesting now is going to put one additional dollar on the table for poor children. I cannot agree that the bill, as it is put forward now, taking away hunting and fishing licences, is going to do very much at all. But I will agree that the bill as constituted has enough in it to make it valid and to help reform a system that is broken down. It's going to take a lot more than the bill, though; it's going to take courage and it's going to take guts from this government to find the money to hire the workers and to put in a computerized system that will work. If that is done in conjunction with the bill, then poor families everywhere have something to cheer for today.

1740

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): Payment from FRO was a very significant issue during the campaign and in the first several months of our government. I recall meeting a lady on the street in Orléans. I was going door to door. She said, "If you do something, make sure you clean up FRO." She was explaining to me that she had to take a day off work to get through. The phone calls were never answered. She would take a day off work in order to pursue payments from someone who was not making the proper payments according to court orders and who was not being forced by the government to make those payments.

I was fortunate later on to spend a couple of days in the standing committee on public accounts, and this issue came up. The system is very poor. I don't know anything about computers, but I understand the programming is done in COBOL. It's a really old system. In 1994, the Auditor General said, "You have to replace your computer system. It's needed," and this never happened. This went on and on and on. There were at least \$10 million per year in extra costs for social services because we were not pursuing the people who rightfully should have been paying for their children and their spouse.

I asked a question of the deputy minister, Mr. Costante, at the meeting. I basically said, "This has been going on for four or five years. It's \$10 million a year. Are you saying that, really, we have lost to this government \$70 million a year because we do not have an

adequate system in place?" I'll give you Mr. Costante's answer: "That's correct. It's in that ballpark," of \$70 million.

So I'm very pleased to see that the minister has brought this bill forward. We're going to be very businesslike about enforcing these payments. I look forward to the families and the children who are caught in these situations being much better looked after.

Mr. Sterling: Of course, this bill has nothing to do with the computer system or the technology that is going to be used. In fact, I believe the direction that the ministry is going in will continue to frustrate the FRO in getting a workable system in place. That is because they seem to refuse the opportunity to purchase the software and the knowledge from the British Columbia government, which I think they should duplicate here in Ontario, because their system works. The bureaucracy seems to be stuck in this place where they want to have their own individual, unique system rather than adopt a system that works. The technology, as the member for Beaches—East York pointed out, is very, very important.

I think the member for Beaches—East York really makes a good case, although he didn't say it, for this bill to go to committee so that practitioners in the field can come forward to the committee and give us their real-life experience in terms of implementing these new proposals.

The member for Beaches—East York pauses when he reads the section which gives the director huge powers with regard to seeking information from unions, from any person, from any entity or any public body. We shouldn't give lightly to an individual, whoever that individual is, the power to invade into privacy without the proper checks, and I do not see the proper checks in this bill. I think we should examine that in committee.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I just wanted to be on record as mentioning that in 1999, when I was elected, one of the things that came to my attention right off the bat in my constituency was the problems with the Family Responsibility Office. I don't think anyone in this chamber from that time to now has indicated there weren't problems with FRO, and there were problems that have been pointed out from the stories from everybody.

The member from Beaches—East York is bringing to our attention some of the problems we've had; the member from Nepean—Carleton indicated what this is all about, and I concur with both of them and with most of the people who have been speaking specifically about some of the problems. Let's talk about that.

Depending on who you talk to, it's \$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion of uncollected support. The vast, vast majority, as we all know, are women and children. Some 230,000 children not receiving that support is not acceptable, and will not be acceptable, I am sure, from any member in this House—230,000 kids not getting the support they need in order for them to have a level playing field. What steps are we taking to do that? We need to ask and challenge ourselves on a regular basis that there are men, women and children out there who are not getting the

support that is necessary. And “the tricks of the trade” that was being referred to—I fully understand and recognize each of us in our own riding will be able to pull up those examples, clearly. They switch their assets. I had an example in my riding where somebody basically handed over his entire business to a friend just so he didn’t have to pay arrears of \$25,000. He had a good friend, I guess, and I am not sure whether that person will get the company back, or the boat or the cottage that he owned, but it is all in somebody else’s name. To what extent will people go in order not to pay? Those are small examples of what’s going on across the province. We’d better get our act together to make sure that the \$1.6 billion gets collected. In some of the problems that took place, we went to third-party collection; it got us \$30 million. Not good enough. I challenge us all to get it right.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It has come to my attention just today in the media that the federal Liberal government in Ottawa has called on the RCMP to investigate itself. When you look at the overall context of what this is about—it’s calling on this government to start to bring some serious concern to the Family Responsibility Office and the arrears issue.

I just want to be on the record first to thank my constituency staff person, Fern Sargent, who is an expert and works tirelessly on this bill. I should say that all members probably have dedicated staff in their offices that arguably took the place of the once-upon-a-time regional offices. We do give face-to-face service to constituents at all times, and I want to thank Fern for that.

This bill does go some way to solve an age-old problem. It’s a problem that—actually, Shelley Martel and Peter Kormos broke into the Family Responsibility Office, some would say illegally, to find out about the system. We implemented a number of changes, some of which are built upon in this Bill 155. But all I can say is the court orders themselves, and the process itself for determining orders, is something that each of us should be somewhat concerned about. I just think that fairness is an important ingredient. The orders from the courts themselves are indeed court orders. The mechanism under the Marriage Act is somewhat more problematic for the litigants involved, that is, the two spouses who are trying to resolve issues of child custody and arrears and payments.

I want to be on the record as supporting the intent to make sure we bring people into compliance. In fact, we introduced a number of the very fundamental changes in this bill. But there is no preamble in this bill. The bill says it chiefly falls into three categories of enforcement tools available to the director on default payers in streamlining enforcement procedures. I’m concerned this government once again is intruding in the lives of the people of Ontario and I believe it should receive full and thorough public hearings.

The Acting Speaker: I’m going to have to ask the member for Durham to withdraw the unparliamentary

reference he made to the members for Niagara Centre and for Nickel Belt.

Mr. O’Toole: The members for Niagara Centre and Nickel Belt aren’t here, but I will withdraw if I said anything that was untrue.

The Acting Speaker: I’ll return now to the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the ruling. I think the members from Niagara Centre and Nickel Belt were doing their parliamentary duty on that day.

I would like to thank very much the commentators from Ottawa–Orléans, Lanark–Carleton, Brant and Durham for the statements they have made and the comments they have made about my speech.

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To the member from Ottawa–Orléans, you are right. I think the amount you were quoting of some \$70 million is probably a little low, but there is certainly a lot of money that this government could save and, I would hope, pass on to those poor children who need it.

To the member from Lanark–Carleton, you’re right. The BC system appears to be working, and I cannot fathom for a moment why that has not been looked into in more detail. But Accenture seems to have the nod up until this point. I hope that’s not the case. Your real-life experiences and the privacy checks you were talking about are things that need to be looked at very carefully.

To the member from Brant, you talked about the money transfers. That is in part what I was trying to say, but perhaps not well enough. When you were speaking, it brought back to me the old movie called the War of the Roses. If anyone remembers that, that is exactly what happens in some of these families. The level of hatred, wanting to get back at the other party, grows so strong that it doesn’t matter what the issue was any more or the fact that they are not paying; they just want to get back at them.

The member from Durham talked about dedicated staff. I would agree with him. We probably all have dedicated staff in our offices who make the FRO work as well as it does, although with better legislation, with a computerized system and with more people there in the office, it will work that much better, to the benefit of all the members of this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. McNeely: I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

This proposed legislation has the three sections, as was just mentioned: strengthening enforcement tools, improving methods for locating defaulting payers and streamlining enforcement procedures.

When the new minister took over about 15 or 18 months ago, this situation was dire. This was probably the worst complaint that we got in our riding offices. It was leaving families and children with no recourse. They were going to social services. And people who were not paying according to the court orders owed the provincial government \$212 million. Since the minister took over—

it was some months ago when this bill was introduced—I think \$60 million of that had been collected. Just with the tools that were available and some increased staffing, the FRO was made a more realistic tool for the government in order to do our work of enforcing the court orders which come out of these broken families.

When you think that \$10 million was the deputy minister's estimate of what it was costing the system each year, if the new computer system does cost \$40 million, which was suggested earlier, then you have a payback in four years. Not only that; you're giving much better attention to these families who are at risk, these families who have major problems. Rather than going to social services, they are able to keep their jobs and continue working. To think that a woman—and this was not an isolated case—would have to take a day off work because calls were not being answered by the FRO office for areas outside, certainly for the Ottawa area, I am very pleased to see this legislation coming through.

I think it's going to do the work that's necessary to clean up the system. We heard at the public accounts sessions that accounts that were in default weren't being followed for up to eight months; eight months without trying to track people who weren't making their payments. After eight months, the situation was much more difficult to resolve. Families were already on social assistance and major problems were occurring in the system.

It is the right direction that we are going in. It's making it tougher. It should be made tougher. When the courts hand out the decisions, they have to be followed. If we don't follow them, we're ridiculing the courts as well. So I am very pleased to see that this piece of legislation is taking us down the right track and that we are going to get the technology in place. That's so important today. You can't track tens of thousands of claims without proper computer systems. The sooner that's in place, the better. The payback was judged to be about four years on that system. So the sooner we get on with it and do it, the better we are going to be in Ontario to protect the families and protect the single parents who depend on that money every month, and to make sure that people are responsible for the orders coming down from the courts.

I'll close there and let the member for Scarborough Centre take over.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to speak in this debate on Bill 155, An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996. I'm pleased to speak to this debate because it's something that I think applies to families right across this province: families that are struggling; families with single parents trying to make ends meet.

We don't have too much time tonight, and I know this debate will finish in about four minutes today and we'll move on and continue the debate at a later time, but I see my friend Daniel up in the gallery. He's a young Scar-

borough lad who for years has experienced some tough times. I know him; he's talked to me about some of his situations through the years. He's very interested in politics and very interested in what's going on here today. Hence he's the only person I see in the gallery today observing these proceedings, unless there is somebody on the other side, which I don't believe there is. He's an individual who's been able to rise above difficult times, an individual who has experienced some of the tougher things that people in our community sometimes have to experience, but he's been able to rise above them. I commend him not only for being here today but for being able to do that.

In my area—I represent Scarborough Centre—I've heard from many people, men and women, with regard to the need for improvements to this act, the need to bring forward the initiatives this act brings forward and the \$40 million that we're investing over four years in a new case management system and new technology, which is extremely important.

Just yesterday, on Sunday, I received a call from a former constituent of mine, somebody I knew through other things, hockey and whatnot, who's a mother of four children and whose husband currently is not paying the support she needs. She is this far away from ending up in a shelter. So today my staff are working at assisting her in trying to make ends meet. It is not easy with four children, whom she's trying to allow to participate in society, to play hockey, to go to school. She's trying to provide them with the necessities of life, yet having to struggle each and every step of the way. There are problems with income tax because her husband was in business for himself, and who knows what could have gone on in terms of what was claimed and what wasn't claimed. She's trying to pay back overpayments from social assistance because of confusion following the separation.

It's really tough for single mothers and single fathers to cope with these things. So anything we can do to provide them with assistance, we have to do. In this case we're looking at increased enforcement by extending the maximum jail term for failure to comply with court orders. We don't want to do that in each and every circumstance because that's not something we'll always need to apply. But at the end of the day, somebody has to be responsible for those families. Somebody has to be responsible for those children. It's our responsibility as a government to ensure that those orders are enforced.

I see the Speaker getting to the edge of his seat. I think he's ready to interrupt me here and call it a day.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We're not calling it a day.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader says we're not calling it a day. This House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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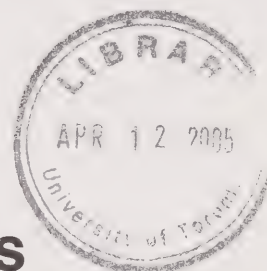
First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**



Monday 4 April 2005

Lundi 4 avril 2005

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 April 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 avril 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001 /
Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur les
municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr Gerretsen.

Applause.

**Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs
and Housing, minister responsible for seniors):** Thank
you all very much on this beautiful spring evening.

I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary
assistant from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who will be
speaking on this bill as well. This is the bill that has been
talked about in the House on a number of occasions in
the past. When attempts have been made to move
unanimous consent on its contents, unfortunately we
weren't able to get that.

Let me just read you the main content of the bill, so
that the people at home and those of us here who may not
be as familiar with it will know what we're talking about.
It is An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001, and it
says—

Mr. John R. Baird (Nepean–Carleton): Thank God
we formally shamed you into bringing it in.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Oh, there's the member from
Nepean–Carleton. He's the individual, I believe, who hasn't
allowed this bill to be passed by unanimous consent.

This is truly a bill which I know that everybody in this
House totally agrees with, because it states in its op-
erative section, "The province of Ontario endorses the
principle of ongoing consultation between the province
and municipalities in relation to matters of mutual
interest and, consistent with this principle, the province
shall consult with municipalities in accordance with a
memorandum of understanding entered into between the
province and the Association of Municipalities of
Ontario." That's the full content of the bill.

As a matter of fact, if the members wish, I could read
the entire memorandum of understanding as well. It was

a memorandum that was signed last year during the
AMO conference in Ottawa. It goes on for about four or
five pages, and it talks about the manner in which
consultation will take place between the province and our
municipalities. I know that, to the people who may be
watching, this may be a relatively minor thing. They
might even say, "Why are they taking so much time to
debate this bill?" Because I know this bill will be debated
here tonight, and it will be debated probably on at least
two or three other occasions as well.

People should understand that there is a very funda-
mental principle involved in the debate of a bill of this
nature, and that is that, as most people know, we have,
constitutionally at least, two levels, two orders of govern-
ment in this country: a federal government and a
provincial government. The municipal powers, or the
manner in which the provincial governments of this
country deal with their municipalities, are all contained
within the jurisdiction as set out in the British North
America Act as to how municipalities are to be dealt
with, in the provincial powers of that act.

That's why it is so important that we recognize, now
that we're in the 21st century, that municipalities should
no longer be regarded as simply creatures of provincial
Legislatures. We believe that municipalities and the tre-
mendous number of functions that they carry out on a
day-to-day basis—in municipalities, in communities
large and small across this province, from the largest city,
the city of Toronto, with its millions of people who live
here and reside here and work here etc., to the smallest
municipality out there.

The people of Ontario may be interested in knowing
that currently we have some 445 municipalities in this
province. Each one of them is headed by an elected
council, councils from as small as five individuals to
councils as large as 45 individuals, as is the case in the
city of Toronto. Of course, they're all headed by a head
of council, who are usually called mayors but sometimes
they're called reeves or wardens in the case of a two-tier
system where you have a level of government at the
regional or county level that basically takes in a number
of municipalities and a lower level as well. In that case
the head of the council is called a warden, and they're
usually elected on a yearly basis from among the
members who make up that regional or county council.
Of course, they're not always called wardens; they're
quite often called chairs as well when we're talking about
regional governments.

1850

In any event, the whole intent of the bill is that we as a government are committed to forging a closer working relationship with our municipalities across this province because we realize the importance the municipalities play in the day-to-day lives of the people who live in Ontario. We realize that most of the day-to-day activities that people have are within their own communities, within their own municipalities, and certainly issues such as health care, education and international issues are important to them. But many services they rely on, on a day-to-day basis, in order to function within their municipalities are provided by local municipal councils. That's why we as a province think it's extremely important that the relationship that exists between the province and the municipalities be the best it possibly can be.

It's with that in mind that we're bringing this bill forward, because we all realize that we have one invaluable asset, and that is the diverse expertise of our local governments. But it is not enough to merely recognize this pool of local knowledge and experience. To make it work, we first have to ensure that we show respect for one another, that this level of government, the provincial level, show respect to the municipal level of government, because it has often been said that municipal leaders, who are chosen at the local level, are the closest to the people. They are in contact with them on a day-to-day basis. They work with them, they play with them, they live in the same neighbourhoods etc., and certainly local politicians find out about particular issues in a municipality before politicians at the provincial and federal levels.

The kind of respect I'm talking about hasn't always been the case when it came to how provinces, and how this province of Ontario, dealt with municipalities. Many previous governments treated local governments as if they were children. Quite often they were referred to as creatures of the province. This relationship traditionally has been very prescriptive. The province told municipalities what to do, how to do it and when to do it. That is what we're trying to change with this law that we're bringing forward here today.

When our government came into power in October 2003, we made a commitment to do things differently. Under our strong communities priority, we set about building better relations with municipalities than this province had seen in many years. We've introduced changes that demonstrate the trust and confidence that we have in our municipal leaders. This new approach is reflected in many actions we've taken to date.

For example, we've developed and implemented a new rural plan, one that supports a strong, healthy and prosperous rural Ontario.

We've revamped the northern Ontario prosperity plan to better promote investment, jobs and opportunities for northern Ontario.

We've also launched a comprehensive review of Ontario's Municipal Act, 2001—years ahead, by the way, of its scheduled review. We're doing that to make

sure it remains relevant and meets the needs of today's municipalities and the people who reside in them.

We've made investments in municipalities and lightened some municipal costs; for example, public health costs. We've decided that municipalities should no longer pay 50% of the cost but more and more should be paid for out of taxpayers' dollars that they contribute to the province by increasing that by 5% per year.

These are just some results of our new relationship with Ontario's local communities and their elected governments.

Of course, you cannot tap into local expertise if you're not prepared to listen. We know that there's more to consulting with local municipalities than just giving them an advance look at a news release the day it's issued. We've learned what not to do from the previous government's activity in restructuring—as we all know, the Who Does What exercise that was done a number of years ago. Instead, we started out by making a commitment to create a new working relationship. That's just what we're doing by this act: by listening, by valuing municipal input and by acting on what municipalities have told us.

We now have monthly or at least bimonthly meetings with municipal representatives. These meetings have extremely full agendas. They put cabinet ministers in front of municipal leaders for frank and full exchanges of views and ideas. We believe that is unparalleled accountability. These meetings are very productive, and have assisted our government in refining our policies that are helping to make Ontario's communities stronger. We believe in giving local municipal leaders a voice when decisions are made that affect them and their communities.

Our consultation process has been a true two-way street. We consult with municipalities on emerging policy, and we also encourage municipal representatives to raise the issues that they think need addressing.

This new spirit of consultation and partnership also shows itself in practical ways at the program level. One example of that is our new Ontario municipal partnership fund, which was announced last week by my cabinet colleague the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Greg Sorbara. The new Ontario municipal partnership fund is a fairer and more transparent funding model that will replace the community reinvestment fund as the province's largest transfer payment to municipalities for the year 2005 and beyond.

Our new program is greatly improved, thanks to our consultations and hard work with municipal representatives. Under the new program, it will provide \$656 million to 386 municipalities in Ontario—an increase of \$38 million or 6.1% over the community reinvestment funds received by municipalities last year. It will go a long way toward addressing what municipalities told us were the major irritants and inequities in the complex and outdated CRF model.

Let me also quickly say that under this new system, some municipalities will not be getting the same kind of

funding that they've been used to. We simply determined that there were too many inequities, too many situations in the past where municipalities had the same assessment of per-household income and yet were treated differently by government as far as what was then the community reinvestment fund was concerned.

Under the new program, the funding is going to be used in the following ways: It will assist municipalities with their social program costs; it will provide assessment equalization to those municipalities with limited property tax assessment bases; it will respond to policing costs in rural municipalities, which currently vary tremendously; and it will recognize the unique challenges facing northern and rural communities. Let there be no doubt about it: As a result of a number of changes that have taken place over the last 10 years or so, the smaller rural and northern communities face the toughest task in making ends meet.

So the new plan is taking these four factors into account to come up with the new funding system. As I mentioned before, most municipalities will benefit from it, but there will be some municipalities that will simply not benefit from it to the same extent. But even in those cases, we have decided that the revenues of those municipalities who will be getting less money in the long run over a period of time will be on a sliding-scale basis, so they will not lose that money immediately.

1900

The new Ontario municipal partnership fund is unmistakable proof that our new way of consulting and working in partnership is paying off. The essence of a stronger provincial-municipal relationship is, no surprises, and consultation. The toughest thing for a local municipality to find out is that the province, or indeed the federal government, has made changes during a year that had financial consequences on a municipality and that it simply cannot raise the taxes to implement those changes. Basically, what we said to our municipal partners is that if there are financial implications, they will not go into effect until the next calendar year so that they can plan for it.

As part of our strong communities initiative, our government has made a strong commitment to consult with municipalities on changes to legislation and regulations that affect municipal budgets in a significant way. That was the basis for the memorandum of understanding we signed with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It sets out the framework by which the province consults Ontario's municipal leaders. We strengthened that commitment by adding a protocol to the memorandum of understanding to ensure that the province consults with municipalities on federal-provincial matters that have direct municipal impacts. This agreement has guided our actions and informed our dealings with our municipal partners.

But we wanted to take this even further. We sought to make it a law that consultations should take place shaped by the terms of an agreed-upon MOU. Preparing to take this next step brings us here today. As members may

recall, the memorandum of understanding is not recognized in the current Municipal Act. But we as a government feel that this is such a valuable and rewarding approach that it should be. That's why, last year, on June 8, I introduced first reading of Bill 92, An Act to amend the Municipal Act. With the support of this Legislature, this amendment would commit the province, in the future, to consult with municipalities on matters of mutual interest in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The memorandum of understanding provides for regular meetings between provincial cabinet ministers and municipal leaders. These meetings offer the chance to discuss matters of importance to both levels of government. These meetings also allow the province to get feedback from municipal leaders before putting in place new laws and regulations that affect municipalities.

The people of Ontario are better served when all governments work together. Jointly, we can create and implement better policies and programs and deliver better services to our shared constituents. With the support of this House, we will be able to move forward with our commitment to consult and co-operate. This amendment, if passed, will ensure that the local contact and consultation takes place on a regular basis. It will take what is a best practice and enshrine it as a legal principle. It will mean real, positive change for the people of Ontario in how their local and provincial governments interact for the benefit of all.

As a government, we are committed to working with Ontario's municipalities. Together we are building a stronger foundation for Ontario's future. Our shared goal is to provide stronger communities that work for the people who live in them and to help their communities provide the high quality of life that we all want for all the people of Ontario. So I urge the members to support this new inclusive and consultative partnership by voting in favour of Bill 92.

I now turn the floor over to my parliamentary assistant from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak in favour of Bill 92.

Coming together to accomplish something we can't do as individuals or as separate entities is basic to human society. It's human nature to form associations with people who have like interests and common goals. At various times in our lives we've joined service clubs, professional organizations, sports teams or recreational groups. In rural Ontario, we've all been witness to or participated in endeavours such as barn raisings or cleanups after a disaster.

The history of municipal organization in Ontario follows much the same track. There are various alliances and working relationships between Ontario's towns and cities dating back to before there was an Ontario. Today's formal structure began to emerge in the late 1800s with the creation of the Ontario Municipal Asso-

ciation, which was formed in 1899 in Hamilton. Roughly 30 years ago, this evolved into the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or AMO, as it is commonly known. AMO represents the interests of its members, be they large or small, and it brings together under one roof a vast array of municipal experiences and expertise.

AMO is a valuable ally of the Ontario government. We often call upon AMO's members for advice and help in assessing new provincial programs or policy proposals. AMO members have served as working groups on which to test new ideas and approaches. They are expert panels by which to fly new government programs or draft policies.

It is truly a symbiotic relationship; both sides gain from this. AMO and the local stakeholder groups that we consult with are pools of expert knowledge and community experience. Working with them gives us a local perspective that helps the province refine its proposals and tailor its response to local needs and local conditions.

Who better to offer comment on the government's ideas than the people who will be on the receiving end of those ideas? This is stakeholder input at its most effective, where programs that will have an impact on the local level are shaped with the help of the local level.

Not only are Ontario's local governments a source of invaluable viewpoints and information; they are also useful proving grounds. Having access to the municipal level gives the province the opportunity to road-test new initiatives, to see where the bugs are and where there might be room for different approaches.

Many successful government programs in Ontario can trace their development back to pilot or local demonstration projects. In program development and fine-tuning, local input and local experience are irreplaceable.

Given the positive outcomes that we've experienced, it's no wonder that we want to recognize in law this way of doing business. We are striving for the best of both worlds. We want to make sure that programs and policies aimed at making life better at the local level actually do deliver at the local level. We want to give local elected representatives the chance to work with us in the best interests of their citizens to make government programs the best that they can be. That's the essence of the relationship that the government has with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, our most important municipal stakeholder. That's why we want to ensure that that is the way the province and the local level continue to operate for years to come.

That's why we've introduced Bill 91, An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001. This bill will amend the Municipal Act, 2001, to recognize in legislation the memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It firmly establishes our new approach to relationship between Ontario and its municipal governments. With the support of the Legislature, it will form and firm our promise to consult with local municipalities and their elected officials on matters that will have significant local impact.

Our hope is that it will serve, at one and the same time, as a heads-up for advance notice of proposed future directions. It represents a fair and inclusive approach to program and policy development. If passed, this proposed amendment would give local municipal governments more of a voice in designing initiatives that affect them.

1910

As a government, we are striving to make Ontario the place to be: the place with the best-educated and most highly skilled people, the healthiest people, and the most prosperous and forward-looking society. We build that vision from the ground up and with the support and input of our citizens and their governments at the local level.

We value the input and the involvement of local communities and their citizens. We recognize the contribution at the community level in making Ontario the place to be. We are committed to working with Ontario's municipalities. Our shared goal is to provide stronger communities that work for the people who live in them, and to help them provide the high quality of life that we want for all the people of Ontario.

Our government places a high premium on local democracy and local decision-making. Our approach is simple: We respect municipal leadership and expertise. We're determined to provide these local leaders with the tools they need to succeed, and a greater ability to use those tools. Municipal governments have the local knowledge. They have the expertise. They are the ones in closest daily contact with the people in their communities. We've changed the government's way of working with Ontario's communities, be they large or small, and now we want to ensure that this new approach is made into "business as usual."

It is our goal to make it a requirement for future governments to consult with municipalities in the way that we have done. We want to see that this is done as spelled out in the existing memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We are breaking this cycle of "ready, fire, aim," of municipal policy development that has occurred in the past, and we are setting down on paper a commitment to treat local governments with the respect and consideration they deserve.

There is no such thing as two classes of vote in this province. The vote that a citizen casts in a federal, provincial or local election has the same weight and the same value. The governments elected through this process are as valid, as knowledgeable and as representative of the people whether they govern on behalf of community, province or country. Our commitment is simply to recognize this, and to reflect in our dealings with Ontario's communities and local governments that we are all working for the people of this province. We must all act thoughtfully and responsibly, mindful of those who have given us this power to act on their behalf.

We want to continue to seek the views of those representing Ontario's cities, towns, villages, townships, counties and regions. We want to continue to incorporate,

in our future action plans and programs, what we hear from individuals and organizations across Ontario about their communities' most pressing needs and priorities.

If passed, this amendment would enshrine the principle that the government consult with municipalities on matters that have strong local impact. Furthermore, it would ensure that consultation follow the framework laid out in a memorandum of understanding between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

Local governments are the ones best able to help us determine how to respond to local conditions. This bill, if passed, will formalize the process of seeking their advice and expertise. It would recognize that they have a vital contribution to make and should have a say in the decisions with which they and their residents will have to live.

I ask the members of this assembly to join me in voting in favour of Bill 92.

I had the honour and privilege of witnessing the formal signing of the memorandum of understanding with the municipalities in Ottawa this past summer at AMO's annual conference. It was a momentous occasion, it was a historic occasion, and I felt very privileged to be there. Now we want to enshrine that into legislation through Bill 92.

I thank all of you for the opportunity to express my support of this.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): This bill is so brief—I never use the word “short”—that I could read it during a two-minute hit, but it also is really specious in content.

It says, “The province of Ontario endorses the principle of ongoing consultation between the province and municipalities in relation to matters of mutual interest....” Well, who disagrees with that?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Then vote for it.

Mr. Sterling: I may vote for it.

Then it says, consistent with that, “the province shall consult with municipalities in accordance with a memorandum of understanding entered into between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.” If there is already a memorandum of agreement in place, why do we need the bill? Why do we need this bill at all? That's the way the two parties are acting. Why would you want to do that?

We know, from the history of this particular party, that it doesn't matter whether it is in legislation or not because, with a flip of the switch, they will come back to the Legislature and undo what they did before, like with the Taxpayer Protection Act. They signed a document during the election and then after came back and said, “We can't live with this thing, so we'll just change the law in the Legislature. We have 70 seats”—bang; done; finished.

This place costs, I think, about \$200,000 a day to run. This is one sessional day: \$100,000. I'd rather give the 100,000 bucks to a needy municipality in my riding than spend our legislative time dealing with a useless act.

How could anybody be against this particular piece of legislation? It doesn't mean anything. There are no penalties if the government of Ontario doesn't negotiate in good faith. This is what logical people would do anyway.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to ask the minister: I looked through the memorandum of understanding and I'm looking for the section that talks about enforcement mechanisms that would ensure that the government actually does have to sit down and consult with AMO and, if they don't, that there is some kind of penalty for non-compliance. Really, who is going to be against consultation? I'm much more interested in what happens when the government consults and then does what it wants to anyway and leaves a huge financial burden on the municipalities on the end of the day.

I'm thinking of the Minister of Agriculture, who got caught out about a year ago changing—was it the Tile Drainage Act?—legislation and financing, with no kind of consultation whatsoever with the municipalities. An announcement was made, and I'm not sure whether the Minister of Agriculture even knew about it—taken completely off guard. There was a huge hue and cry from the municipalities about what the loss of that program meant, and then the government had to scramble, scramble, scramble and do some political damage control and put some money back into place to meet with the concerns of the municipalities. So you can consult all you want, but at the end of the day, if the government wants to go ahead and download services or wants to withdraw financial resources for services, the government is going to do that. We had clear evidence of that less than a year ago with this scenario and this bit of a fiasco with the Minister of Agriculture.

I find it very interesting that we have a bill that says that the government is going to consult, but there is nothing in the legislation that I can see, and nothing in the memorandum of agreement that I read, that says there are going to be some penalties for non-compliance, and oh, by the way, if the government downloads services even though municipalities have said, “Please don't do that,” that there will be some recourse for those municipalities that have to suffer an increased financial burden. I don't see any of that, so I really am wondering what the point of the bill is when those things are missing.

1920

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): It is indeed a pleasure to rise this evening to say a few words and to speak in support of Bill 92, a bill that, yes, is a very short, little bill, and right: Logical people would support it, so that's why I will be supporting it.

I do want to say that there had been opportunities in the past where consultation didn't happen between municipalities, provincial government and all levels of government. This is basically enshrining that idea that consultation is important. It wasn't that long ago that I joined with my provincial colleagues from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Northumberland and Ottawa–Orléans in meeting with the Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus.

That was an opportunity of sharing ideas and bringing forward to the minister ideas which were important to our government and which were important to the people in our ridings.

I also want to say that I was there in January 1998 when an ice storm hit eastern Ontario. I was the mayor of the community. At that stage, it was necessary for consultations to happen between three levels of government—federal, provincial and municipal. A disaster led to a wonderful spirit of co-operation taking place in eastern Ontario. But it shouldn't be disasters; it shouldn't be anything but legislation and the strong will of people at the municipal and federal levels to get together, consult and put the best decisions forward for the people. I think that's what this bill is all about. In the spirit of co-operation and consultation, that's why I will support this bill.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This proposed legislation, Bill 92, as we know, will cause the province to consult with municipalities, and they need a law to force them to do that. It is a short bill, as we've heard this evening: less than a page—a little over half a page, really. But I question, now knowing the track record of this government, if it really is worth the page it's written on. As we've heard this evening, this is the same government that voted for the Taxpayer Protection Act, jacked up taxes—no referendum. We know the rest of the story.

We're scratching, with a piece of legislation that's only half a page long. If you read the first sentence, "Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, enacts as follows," and then it goes on to briefly describe the intention of consultation with municipalities. But I point out, in that very first sentence—and I've seen this in other legislation—it says, "by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly." It doesn't mention municipalities in that very first sentence. I would think, if we're going to think outside the box, to push the envelope and be serious about writing a piece of legislation with a goal to enshrine consultation with the municipal levels of government, both upper- and lower-tier, perhaps that very first sentence should have incorporated that kind of phraseology.

I suspect that every bill does begin with that same preamble, that same sentence. I'm sure the clerks could advise us; there probably is a tradition where it has that wording. But we see this right here, that it will rely on "the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario." It does not mention municipalities. Go figure.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has two minutes in which to respond.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let me first of all thank the four members for their edification as to what this is all about. I'm kind of surprised by the member for Lanark-Carleton. He's one of the senior members of this House, a man who is as highly respected as the member for St.

Catharines, because they're of roughly the same vintage here.

Mr. Baird: Oh, come on.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Yes, they are.

He knows as well as I do that he's basically saying, "Why do you need this legislation if you've already got a memorandum of understanding? You can just change this law with the stroke of a pen." He knows better than that. He's been here for over 25 years, and he darned well knows that it is a very intense and long process to change any law—the number of days of debate that it takes here, the bills that have to go through at least three readings.

The whole idea behind this bill is to make sure that that memorandum of understanding cannot be ignored, cannot be changed unilaterally. The fact of enshrining it in legislation is that it will say to generations to come, to governments to come, that this is the process of how we deal with our municipalities: Before there are any changes made, particularly those that affect the financial abilities of municipalities, there will be consultation with them.

I am also surprised at the senior member from Nickel Belt. She basically is suggesting, "What's all this consultation about? Why should you even consult?" If there's one group of individuals who talk about consultation even more than the government does in this House, it is the members of her caucus. They're always about consulting, and this is exactly what we're saying here. We are saying to our municipal colleagues, "We will not make any changes that will affect your financial ability to carry on without consulting with you first." That's exactly what this bill is about.

I look forward to the unanimous consent that will obviously be given to give this bill speedy second reading passage.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce a guest in the gallery here. He is the manager for the Canadian under-18 junior hockey team. He is just in from Calgary and this Saturday is flying with the Canadian junior team to represent Canada in Calgary. I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming him. His name is Mr. Ron Pyette.

The Acting Speaker: It wasn't a point of order, but a point well made all the same.

Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: As the member for St. Catharines would know, it's more than 27 years that I've been here, and if it wasn't for some Johnny-come-latelies who don't have experience in this area, perhaps the minister would understand what this legislation really does.

The Acting Speaker: I do not believe that is a point of order.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I believe we have unanimous consent to defer our leadoff.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to defer the lead? Agreed.

Mr. Miller: It is my pleasure to join the debate this evening on Bill 92, which is really about consultation. They are saving paper on this bill, that's for sure; it's two sheets of paper. It's about having the provincial government consult with municipalities on matters of mutual interest in accordance with a memorandum of understanding.

I'd like to point out that this bill was introduced last June 8, and it is the member from Nepean—Carleton, who is sitting here in front of me tonight, and the member from Erie—Lincoln, who on many occasions—

Mr. Baird: We shamed them.

Mr. Miller: —shamed the government into finally calling this bill forward. They asked for unanimous consent twice on February 21. On March 9, the members for Erie—Lincoln and Nepean—Carleton asked for unanimous consent; on March 29, again. As I say, they have shamed the government into finally calling this bill forward.

As I say, they are not wasting a lot of paper on this; it's just one page. It's An Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001. "The bill provides that the province shall consult with municipalities on matters of mutual interest in accordance with a memorandum of understanding entered into between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario."

I'd like to say that the provincial government likes to talk about consultation, but when we really look at what they've been doing, they certainly, in the case of the riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka, have not been consulting.

I would like to refer to the memorandum of understanding briefly: "The current memorandum of understanding promotes the principle of consultation between the province of Ontario and AMO whenever the province proposes statutory or regulatory changes that have a significant impact on municipal budgets." I'd like to ask the government, when they took Muskoka out of the north, was that not a change that would affect municipal budgets? Of course, the answer is, yes, it is.

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Mr. Baird: Oh, what a whopper that was. How much consultation did they have, Norm?

Mr. Miller: There was absolutely no consultation when this government unilaterally removed the six municipalities of Muskoka from the north. The budget was introduced May 18. I think I discovered in the evening of May 18, on page 91 or page 92 of the budget papers, one line that didn't even mention the word "Muskoka" but effectively took Muskoka out of the north. So when it comes down to it, there was absolutely no consultation with the six municipalities in Muskoka when this government unilaterally removed Muskoka from the north.

In fact, just a couple of weeks ago, I went into the licence bureau to renew one of my vehicle licences. The form is printed, and the person looking after the licences said, "No, it's not the number that's printed on the form"—\$48 or whatever it was; I've got the number

wrong—"it's double that." So that shows how much consultation went into this. The forms in the office in Muskoka have the wrong value for how much it costs for a licence fee, because in the north of course the fee is half of what it is in the rest of the province.

We look at other specific issues. The Muskoka oil project: This government unilaterally removed \$2.5 million in funding for the Muskoka oil project. Was there any discussion with John Klinck, the mayor of Gravenhurst, to do with that very serious change in funding? The funding was originally approved in December 2001. Obviously it has a drastic effect on the budget of the town of Gravenhurst—a huge effect. I think their total tax revenues are something like \$4 million a year, and they removed \$2.5 million in funding without any consultation.

A couple of months ago, the mayor talked to the Premier, who said he would get back to him, about some transition, and the mayor still hasn't had a response. There were comics a few weeks ago in the local paper showing the mayor growing a long beard as he waits for the Premier to respond to his concerns about what might happen to replace this funding. The least the Premier could do is call or write and let him know that he's made a decision. Whether that's to pull the plug or not fund them, at least he could give him the courtesy of a response.

When you look at the municipal drainage program that was mentioned by the member from Nickel Belt, that was unilaterally cut by the Minister of Agriculture. I don't believe there was any consultation with the affected municipalities to do with that. You can get up and tell me I'm wrong on that, but as far as I know, that was a cut which obviously affects municipal budgets and there was no consultation whatsoever.

These are just a few examples—and I've got lots more—of how the government has actually acted. It's fine to say that they're in favour of consultation, but how have they actually acted? In many situations, and I'm going to get into more, they have not consulted in matters that very much affect the budgets of municipalities.

In this AMO background on why the MOU is being enshrined in the legislation, it says:

"The pledge recognizes that changes in provincial policies can have a profound effect on the municipal order of government's ability to finance and deliver programs and services that are essential to building strong communities.

"Enshrining the MOU would formally commit the province to consulting with AMO whenever statutory or regulatory changes that have significant impact on municipal budgets are proposed by the province."

It's about consultation. We look at other examples in the last 18 months where the government has acted without any consultation on matters of extreme importance to municipalities. Bill 132, the pit bull ban bill, which is popular in the media—I sat through four days of consultations on that. The problem with that bill is, the government didn't listen to the hundreds of people who came before the committee to point out all the flaws in

the bill. One of the real effects of this bill—it's awful legislation, full of problems, especially when you get down to trying to identify a pit bull or a mixed breed dog that someone thinks is a threat and it's going to end up in the pound. The municipalities will be the level of government that will bear a lot of the costs for trying to enforce Bill 132, as we end up with many dogs in pounds and increased animal control costs. The government did not consult with the municipalities about Bill 132 in terms of the costs they would end up being responsible for. When a similar bill was introduced back in the 1990s in England, it cost millions of pounds, I think £20 million in the first four years, with legal costs and pound costs and the costs of enforcing the bill. So it could have a very significant impact on the municipalities.

We look at the closure of the Frost Centre, which was right on the border of my riding. I think it was in the riding of the member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock as well. That was another action of this government that was done in a matter of days. I found out, and a week later the Frost Centre was actually closed. There certainly was no consultation in advance with the affected municipalities about the closure of the Frost Centre. To give the government a little credit, I'm pleased to see that they've set up a working committee. In fact, I attended the working committee.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's working very well.

Mr. Miller: Hopefully, the member from Peterborough has been attending some of the meetings and taking part in the consultations that are going on. But that's after the fact, only after the government realized they had made a mistake. They didn't do any consultation before they closed this important provincial resource. In the case of the Frost Centre, I think it would have been a heck of a lot easier to have said, "Look, we've got a problem with financing this centre. We need to raise \$1.3 million or trim down some of the operating costs. If we aren't able to do that by next year, we're going to close it," giving the opportunity to the municipalities and the affected parties to keep it going. Instead, they closed it unilaterally, within a matter of a couple of weeks, and have removed most of the assets, so it will be much more of a challenge getting it reopened. I certainly hope, though, that they are able to reopen the centre.

When I look at recent actions of the government, they're looking at a couple of wind test sites in my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, in Carling township. Certainly, that was a heck of a surprise to the municipality of Carling. The mayor, Mike Konoval, has been very concerned about this. I've been receiving hundreds of e-mails from my concerned citizens about the location of the proposed wind test sites right on the coast of Georgian Bay, the Georgian Bay heritage coastline, a very sensitive area. My point, as it relates to this bill, is that there certainly was no consultation with the municipality of Carling and the affected area municipalities about this proposal. I know that Carling is working to find a location that would be suitable, because they're

certainly in favour of wind power, but they just don't want it right on the coast of Georgian Bay, which will have all kinds of people up in arms.

I'd like to talk about a recent issue in the municipality of Muskoka, and that is the funding of the new health unit. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has just been formed. The old Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit is being split up into two health units, and the way the Simcoe Muskoka health unit will be funded has been announced only recently. I have some articles and a letter from the district chairman, Gord Adams, with concerns about that, and I'd like to refer to those. The district chairman wrote to the health minister, quite concerned about the fact that the district of Muskoka didn't get input into their responsibility for the funding of the new health unit, and it directly relates to this memorandum of understanding.

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In the district chair's letter, he says, "Muskoka had no opportunity to affect the report and as a council we had no input to the process.... Minister, we find this absence of consultation in absolute conflict with principles of government-to-government relations espoused by your government.

"One of the key elements announced by Dr. Basrur is the proposed funding formula for the new Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. All of Ontario, including the newly-formed North Bay-Parry Sound District Health Unit, is funded on the basis of population except for Simcoe Muskoka. The formula for Simcoe Muskoka is to be 50% on population and 50% on property assessment. We find this discriminatory approach unacceptable and unjustifiable....

"Based upon population, we expected our health unit levy to be in the order of \$1,138,315. Instead, a special regulation"—so a regulation will have to be brought in—"has been initiated, and it is some \$600,000 higher, at \$1,731,957. That difference translates into a 1.5% additional cost on the property taxes in Muskoka. We have not received an acceptable explanation as to why this approach was taken....

"In conclusion, on behalf of the district municipality of Muskoka council and the people of Muskoka, we wish to register our opposition to the funding formula in the strongest possible terms. I would request a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this matter."

Obviously, we have another example where there was no prior consultation on a matter that will very much affect the budgetary process for the municipality of Muskoka. On that same point, there was a recent newspaper article written by the former Liberal member of provincial Parliament for Muskoka, Mr. Ken Black. I use this article because you would think Mr. Black's opinion might be less partisan than mine. It says, "Muskoka Taxpayers Should Be Thanking Gord Adams." I'll just read a couple of bits from that article.

"I am no apologist for district of Muskoka chair Gord Adams. Fact is, I can probably say without fear of contradiction that there is no one alive today who has levied

more criticism at him than I have over the past half-century."

He goes on to say, "On the basis of what I have been able to learn on the issue, it appears that Gord Adams is right on in his contention that Muskoka is being short-changed on this particular issue.

"Health units in this province are funded by a combination of local and provincial tax dollars.... The allocation for those costs is generally based on the local jurisdiction's percentage of the total population within the health unit.

"Simply put, if municipality A contains 25% of the total population within a particular health unit, it provides 25% of the local share of the costs of operating that unit. However, it appears that formula will not hold true with the new Simcoe Muskoka health unit when it begins operations on April 1....

"However, should one of them disagree with such an arrangement, the basis for contributing the local shares of costs then reverts back to the population-based model. Again it appears that approach will not apply in this case. Our district chair, to his credit, says that isn't fair, and once more I agree with him."

Just to make it clear, in every other health unit in the province, the municipal share is based on population. For the new Simcoe Muskoka health unit, it's based on assessment and population, which means it will cost the district of Muskoka some \$600,000 extra.

Mr. Baird: That's not the first 600. They had the wharf cancelled and—

Mr. Miller: I'd say this is strike three for Muskoka, with all the various hits the government is putting on it.

Following up on the article, Ken Black says:

"I must confess I am not privy to the kind of thinking that produced this rather strange funding model, although I have exchanged several e-mails and telephone calls with Ministry of Health officials in an effort to determine the thought process behind the decision. To date, my questions remain largely unanswered, although I have not given up hope that they may yet emerge.

"In the meantime, I believe that Gord Adams deserves praise, not criticism, for his efforts to protect the interests of Muskoka taxpayers."

Simcoe Muskoka would be the only health unit in the province whose municipal share would be based on assessment and population, not just population. That certainly falls under this bill about consultation on matters that would affect municipalities' funding.

As a result of this whole thing, the district chair wrote to Minister Gerretsen recently, in mid-March, regarding the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit:

"Attached are copies of my recent correspondence to the Premier and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the above subject. Could I please ask for your assistance in arranging a meeting with the Premier, the minister and yourself as soon as possible? We believe that this type of process flies in the face of the principles in the memorandum of understanding with AMO.

"I look forward to hearing from you in the near future."

This is a very concrete example of where the government has not consulted on a matter that is going to have a significant effect on the municipality of Muskoka.

Those are just some of the various issues. I could name others, like the gas tax. Certainly small, northern and rural municipalities have not been consulted and are not benefiting from the gas tax. The greenbelt legislation dramatically affects a number of municipalities, especially in their ability to generate economic development and where the boundaries of that greenbelt will be. They have not been consulted. We see example after example where the government has not consulted with municipalities.

It's important to remember that there is only one taxpayer. I sincerely believe we need to rebalance the taxes between the three levels of government. The municipal governments are dealing with some real nuts-and-bolts issues, basic services like roads and bridges, sewers, and ambulance and fire services. Most municipalities around this province are dealing with substantial tax increases. The district municipality of Muskoka, especially after all the hits they've taken from this government, is facing a 9.8% tax increase this year. Most municipalities are facing 6% to 12% tax increases.

Our leader has been trying to find out what the provincial deficit is for this year. It's probably \$6 billion. They said it was going to be \$2.2 billion, but they were doing some fancy accounting. Now it's probably more like \$6 billion, although our leader wasn't able to get a straight answer in his first number of questions to the Premier. But certainly the province has some concrete programs that we need to deliver on, like health care and education and natural resources and environment.

Then we have the federal government, which has a large surplus. We see from the Gomery inquiry that they're wasting—I would hazard the guess that it's billions of dollars.

I think we need a basic realigning of the taxes in this country, with more of the federal money going down to the municipal level. We also need the three levels of government to consult with each other, and for this government to not just talk about consulting but to actually consult.

In closing, I would like to just mention that I had lunch today with Senator Patricia Birkholz and Representative Dan Acciavatti from Michigan, who were visiting the Legislature. It was very interesting to talk to them about how the US system works and how they deal with financial matters. I am running out of time, so I can't expand on that.

All I would finally say is that I'd like to see this government not just talk about consulting but actually go ahead and do the consulting.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Martel: I appreciated the comments that were made by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka because they pointed out very clearly the big gap between the rhetoric of the government tonight with respect

to consultation and what's really happening on the ground in so many of our communities.

He probably raised three, if not four, different issues with respect to his own riding and some of the communities in it, where there has been zero, zip, nada consultation by the provincial government with the municipalities in his riding on really important issues. That didn't happen five or six or seven years ago; this was in recent months. Probably at the same time that the government was negotiating the memorandum of understanding with AMO, blah, blah, blahing about consultation, they were moving forward with very negative policy changes, with very negative consequences, in this member's riding without any consultation at all.

The government is pretty selective when it comes to consultation in terms of whom it consults with and the issues on which it wants to have some consultation and input. The very concrete examples that the member raised make that really clear.

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I'll go back to a point I raised earlier. I'm looking for the enforcement mechanisms in the memorandum of understanding or the bill itself that really guarantee not only that there will be consultation, but that when the government or the municipalities decide not to consult—and I find it hard to imagine when municipalities wouldn't want to consult on really important issues that affect them financially. Where is the mechanism that ensures that consultation will occur? Where is the penalty section for non-compliance if the government just thumbs its nose at a municipality or at local issues that really impact municipalities, as they have clearly done in the case of municipalities in the riding of the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka?

Consultation is well and good, but at the end of the day, the real issue that impacts most municipalities has to do with the financial resources and whether or not they're coming from this government. It's very clear, with respect to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, that that's not happening. That's the really pressing issue for municipalities in his riding.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's a pleasure to stand in the House and make some comments to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. First of all, I came from a municipal background prior to coming to this Legislature, along with some of my other colleagues. Having been in municipal government for the eight years that that government was in power—when you talk about the lack of consultation from our government, I guess it doesn't surprise me that they're still asleep at the wheel. They closed 28 hospitals—one in my riding. There was no consultation. They left communities fighting with each other.

Let me tell you about the consultations in my own municipality of Brighton. There was an agricultural office. The member at the time said, "They'll never close that; over my dead body." They closed it. It's a good thing he's still living, because I wouldn't want to wish

that on anybody. There were other things, like no consultation on the omnibus bill.

Let me tell you, on the announcement we made last week on our new Ontario municipal partnership fund, I had e-mails galore from my eight municipalities saying that it's about time that we delivered on what our commitments were.

I meet with my municipalities on a regular basis. They are astonished that something like this is happening, that we're open. So when I hear that Bill 92 doesn't have any teeth, I think we are proving to the municipal folks that we are putting our money where our mouth is, delivering what we said we were going to do. Frankly, I can't see anybody voting against this.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a real pleasure to get up and sing the praises of the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. As he said in his remarks, he is standing up for his local and upper-tier levels of government. The actions of this government—the record speaks for itself—have punitively punished the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka by taking it out of the northern municipality grant exercise.

With respect to Bill 92, any person here and those listening tonight should know that the bill is a very insubstantial piece of legislation. It says, "The province of Ontario endorses the principle of ongoing consultation between the province and municipalities in relation to matters of mutual interest and, consistent with this principle, the province shall consult with municipalities in accordance with a memorandum of understanding...."

I was part of the pre-budget consultations throughout the past winter. I was there when Roger Anderson, the current president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, basically pleaded with the government to bring this legislation through. Bill 92, this very small bill that we're discussing tonight, was introduced on June 8, almost a full year ago, and this is the first night we've had a chance to talk about it. Our member from Nepean–Carleton challenged the Liberal House leader to bring this bill forward immediately. That was in response to Roger Anderson's call for action.

I know that there are ongoing discussions. There's a history to this, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, having served as the last mayor of East York, if I recall, a beloved mayor of East York. Many of us here have served locally and/or regionally, upper-tier or lower-tier. I think this is important. We should work together, as the minister said, but the problem in dealing with this government is that you really can't—dare I say it? I don't know whether it's out of order or not—trust what they promise. That's the question I leave with you tonight.

Mr. Baird: I'd like to congratulate the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, who has brought up three examples off the top of his head where this government has already violated this act. They're essentially in contempt of the House.

They took Muskoka out of the north; didn't have guts to make it part of the budget speech; buried it on page 92

of the budget. I didn't even catch it, it was so innocuous. Where was the consultation there? None.

I was shocked to learn they cancelled half the funding for Muskoka wharf. Gone. Any consultation? None.

They broke their promise to designate Ottawa officially bilingual. Did they consult the city of Ottawa about this broken promise? Of course, because he consults Chiarelli about his broken promises.

It's hard to take this bill seriously when this government, in one quick short speech—they have changed their mind on so many issues. I get dizzy, they change their mind so often.

I thought they would've changed their mind—I'm surprised the member from Muskoka didn't mention this—about autistic children, when they promised to extend IBI therapy to autistic children over the age of six. People may disagree with John Baird—they may not like his opinions, they may not like his policies—but John Baird never lies to autistic children.

The Acting Speaker: I think the member is getting very close. I think it should be withdrawn.

Mr. Baird: Speaker, I haven't accused any member of lying.

The Acting Speaker: I think by inference you are suggesting that someone may have.

Mr. Baird: If you request I withdraw, I will honour the dignity of your office. But John Baird is honest and is always truthful to the parents of autistic children, and he never has been anything other than that.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Miller: Thank you to the members from Nickel Belt, Northumberland, Durham and Nepean–Carleton for commenting on my talk this evening.

I would also like to point out—I mentioned a few different things—that another act of the government that certainly created a lot of concern with municipalities is the new funding they are talking about to replace the CRF funding, the community reinvestment fund. In the last few months, there has been a lot of anxiety with municipalities that deal with a lot of mandatory provincial programs that they have no choice over. They count on this community reinvestment fund. The government has been playing some games with that. In fact, when the Minister of Municipal Affairs attended the Rural Ontario Municipal Association's Good Roads convention a month or so ago, he was booed at the question-and-answer, at the bear-pit session, and they had to go back and react to that. The municipalities must not have felt very much a part of the process if, at their one big public meeting, they booed the minister, who now a month later has introduced a new program to replace the CRF funding. I don't know whether that was in reaction to his reception there or not, but they obviously didn't feel a part of the process.

In Parry Sound–Muskoka we have some 26 municipalities and seven First Nations. Those 26 municipalities are very important to the people of the area. They deliver some very important services and they deserve to be

respected and treated fairly. I hope this government will not just talk about consultation but actually act on consulting with their municipal partners.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead because our critic for this is in the chair this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

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Ms. Martel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to your one-hour leadoff at whatever time you get to do this.

I want to focus on two areas that have to do with consultation from the perspective that I don't really believe it's consultation that's important to any number of municipalities, but the financial resources that municipalities need to operate that is the most pressing issue.

I listened to the Minister of Municipal Affairs; I listened to the parliamentary assistant. I heard the word "consultation" used over and over again and references to "a new, inclusive, consultative partnership," and on and on. The thing that struck me is that we have some very recent examples where the rhetoric of the government tonight with respect to consultation just didn't come to pass, and we've heard some very concrete examples from the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. I'm going to give another one here this evening in my remarks as well.

Over and apart from consultation, which municipalities expect to have with the government, is the much more pressing issue for so many municipalities, like my own, of: What are the financial resources that are going to come from the province to help them to deal with the services they are trying to deliver to people who live in their municipalities? That's what I want to focus on here this evening, because I look at the memorandum of understanding, which doesn't speak, really, to the issue of financial resources and what will come and what the expectations could be, and that the government is actually going to cover the costs that municipalities have had to assume to deliver those provincial services that were downloaded—I don't see any of that in the memorandum of understanding; I don't see any of that in the bill. Frankly, for the municipality that I know the best, which is the one where I'm from, I can tell you that they are not half as worried about more consultation with the government as they are about what financial resources they're going to get from the government to deliver the municipal services they have to deliver to residents within the new city of Greater Sudbury.

Let me deal first with Sudbury's experience with the community reinvestment fund, because this is a major point of concern for our new expanded municipality. The CAO of the city reminded me a couple of weeks ago that the city of Greater Sudbury is heavily dependent on funding from the community reinvestment fund. So they are watching the matter of the new fund, whatever it may be called, very closely. It will have a very significant impact on the finances of the municipality and whether or

not the mill rate is going to have to be raised to bring in more taxes in order to pay some of the costs of some of the bills.

Just to give you a bit of background, on January 21 council members from the city of Greater Sudbury entertained a report from the staff about funding and about the shortfall in funding from the province with respect to those services that had been downloaded under the previous government. The background papers note the following, and I'm going to quote some of this document:

"From previous reports, council"—that is, the city of Greater Sudbury council—"is aware that the local services realignment"—LSR—"and the community reinvestment fund"—CFR—"arrangements were introduced by the province in 1998. The promise from the province was revenue neutrality, but only after municipalities achieved a savings target. In the case of the former municipalities now comprising the city of Greater Sudbury, this savings target was some \$7 million. Since 1998, the province has ceased to make adjustments for a number of the downloaded services. The city is carrying about \$3.5 million in its 2005 current budget for downloaded services, which include ambulance, housing, provincial offences and assessment, which are either no longer reconciled or are capped."

Council that night debated this report and also debated the letter that had come from AMO pointing out that the province had not reflected any of AMO's recommendations in its announcement about the CRF. So much for consultation earlier this year. AMO was also, at that time, requesting information from member municipalities about the potential tax impacts on member municipalities if the CRF funding had remained at 2002 levels. So this is what the city dealt with that night and this is what the city sent to Minister Sorbara with respect to the discussion that went on at council that night. As I said earlier, what's really pressing in our community is not more consultation with the province; what's really pressing is how much money we're going to get from this government to deal with the services that have been downloaded.

On February 4, the mayor of the city of Greater Sudbury, David Courtemanche, wrote to the Honourable Greg Sorbara and said the following:

"The citizens and council of the city of Greater Sudbury are concerned by the provincial government's recent announcement to only guarantee reconciliation of the CRF to the 2002 level. This will further erode the position of revenue neutrality, forcing municipal taxpayers to pay more for services that had previously been the responsibility of the province....

"The province must respect the municipal position and the original principles on which the LSR was undertaken regarding this matter. The province needs to respect the AMO resolution dated November 26, 2004, directed to you and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing requesting that CRF continue to be reconciled. The province must respect the recommendations of the

municipal representatives who participated in last year's CRF consultations. The province needs to respect the correspondence from the Northern Ontario Large Urban Mayors Caucus ... the Federation of Northern Ontarian Municipalities ... and the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association ... dated November 1, 2004, requesting the principle of revenue neutrality not be further eroded or abandoned and that reconciliations continue to take place."

What's interesting about this is that the mayor of the city of Greater Sudbury writes this letter after the memorandum of understanding has already been signed with the government. So there has already been some discussion with AMO, there have already been signatures on the dotted line some months previously that the government is going to consult, and after that we still have letters coming from the head of our municipality to this government saying that your most recent announcement on the CRF makes it very clear that you didn't take into account any of the recommendations that were made, any of the consultation, any of the input or any of the information that you got from municipalities on this important letter.

That's why I'm finding it really hard tonight to square the circle, if I might, between the government rhetoric on consultation and what's a clear example in our community, where the mayor points out that, despite the memorandum of understanding that you already signed that said that you're going to consult, you're going to hear our concerns and you're going to take our opinions into account, you go ahead and make an announcement on the community reinvestment fund that very clearly shows that you didn't listen to anything we had to say and you didn't take our concerns into account. We're going to continue to have a huge financial problem in our community as a result.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs went to the Good Roads conference and the meeting of the rural municipalities of Ontario, and it was clear that he hadn't taken any of their input into account with respect to the CRF, because he was booed when he made his announcement about a \$200-million transition fund.

Mr. Baird: What happened?

Ms. Martel: He was booed. If he had taken their concerns into account and if he had responded to their concerns, I doubt that the delegates would have been booing him. They would have been giving him a standing ovation. But instead, it was clear that what he was announcing did not meet their concerns and in fact was going to leave municipalities still in a very difficult situation.

Here is the news release that was put out by AMO at the same time that the minister made his announcement with respect to this \$200-million transition fund:

"The Association of Municipalities of Ontario today raised concerns about the provincial government's plan to replace Ontario's existing \$656-million community reinvestment fund ... with a new model and provide \$200 million in one-time funding to support transition to the

new program. The plan does not include provisions to pay outstanding bills related to the delivery of provincial health and social service programs in 2004.

“This announcement does nothing to address the fact that municipal government subsidizes Ontario’s provincial programs,” said AMO president Roger Anderson. “While the province plans to reconcile CRF funding for 2003, they are leaving municipalities on the hook for 2004. Municipalities have closed their books on 2004 and are now left holding unpaid provincial bills.”

Further in the press release: “While the announcement included \$200 million in one-time transitional funding, questions remain about the long-term impact of a new funding model and the fundamental problems with current cost-sharing arrangements. Removing provincial health and social service costs from the backs of Ontario’s municipalities and property taxpayers is the only fair, equitable and sustainable solution for Ontario communities.”

A quote again from Roger Anderson, AMO president: “Today’s announcement raises as many questions as it answers. It’s too early to determine if municipalities and property taxpayers are any better off under the new model.”

2010

The point I’m making is that the government had already signed the memorandum of agreement with AMO to consult. I know, because I know from my own municipality, that consultations went on with respect to concerns around the CRF. The government didn’t listen to those concerns and the government didn’t respond to those concerns, because the government came up with a plan that has as many questions as answers and didn’t address the funding shortfall. I find it really hard to take seriously the bill that is before us tonight when I know that this is the government’s track record. And it’s a recent track record—within the last two months.

Let me give you an idea of why this is so critical at home. As I said earlier, my municipality is not worried about more consultations. They give their input. They give the best input they can and the best information they can to this government. The problem they have is, the government doesn’t respond to their pressing financial concerns, and it’s clear in this case.

As a result of the announcement the minister made at Good Roads, where he was booed, there was an announcement from our own municipality that said, “The announcement that was made by the McGuinty Liberals does little to resolve our financial problem. The decision to reconcile the CRF for 2003 only means that our city has a shortfall of \$2 million in 2004 and \$3.3 million in 2005. The potential total shortfall over the two years where the McGuinty Liberals have refused to do a full reconciliation is now \$5.4 million.”

Is the government going to guarantee that this shortfall will be covered under its new funding formula? We don’t know. We haven’t heard that yet, have we?

Promising our city that we’re going to receive as much CRF funding in 2005 as we got in 2004 remains a very

serious concern to the members of council. At best, it means that we’re going to receive an amount that leaves us with a \$5.4-million shortfall in 2005. At worst, it means we’re going to receive an amount that will leave us with a shortfall of \$6.1 million, which will have to be picked up and made up out of the pockets of local municipal taxpayers.

From my perspective, the Liberal download looks a lot like the Conservative download. I’ve heard the Liberals be critical of the Conservatives, and I can tell you, we see no significant financial change in the city of Greater Sudbury. We are facing a potential \$6.1-million shortfall this year because your government refuses to reconcile 2004-05.

So you can continue to consult, but we have told you what the problem is. What we’re waiting for is some moolah, some cash, some dinero to fix the problem. We don’t need any more consultations; we need some of the green stuff in order to resolve the problem so we don’t have to go back to the taxpayers and jack up their municipal taxes even more. That’s the first problem.

Let me give you an example of the second problem that this bill does nothing to address. This bill talks about the partnership between the government and municipalities. It says nothing about what the government is doing and what the nature of the partnership is with DSSABs, which are district social services administration boards. They are creatures of the former government. They are predominantly, if not completely, located in northern Ontario. They were a form of municipal/unorganized organizations that were put together for the past government to download services on to both small municipalities and unorganized communities. So the DSSABs were creatures of the former government, but I see no reference to them with respect to AMO and frankly I don’t think they’re represented by AMO.

The point I want to make is that while the government talks about the need to consult with municipalities because they are on the front line delivering services, I’ve got to tell you that from my part of the world you need to be consulting with the DSSABs, because it’s the DSSABs that are delivering the front-line service to many small communities and unorganized areas in my part of the world—for example, Foleyet, Gogama and a number of other small communities. I have DSSABs in my riding, and a number of other northern members have them in theirs as well, but there’s nothing in this bill and there’s nothing in the memorandum of understanding that talks about the nature of the partnership and the relationship with the DSSABs.

I raise this issue because the DSSABs are struggling with serious financial hardships as a result of the download by the former government that have not been resolved by this government. I want to talk about ambulance services in particular. In the budget process that was completed a couple of weeks ago with the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services Administration Board, there was a 3.47% increase in the budget. The provincial share of that increase is 1.4%. The member

municipalities are seeing an increase in their contribution of 6.98%. Most of the costs for the downloaded services—child care, housing, social services etc.—were kept under control, except for emergency services, where that increase in the budget is an increase of 23% for the member municipalities. Most of that is associated with the payment of salaries for paramedics. The DSSABs have decided to bring the paramedics in-house instead of contracting them out to five different local services, so now they are bringing their wages up and providing them with parity. But they've now seen a huge increase in the budget for emergency services. Is the government of Ontario doing anything about ambulance services? No. On the contrary; the government's inaction is making the situation much, much worse with respect to ambulance services and how municipalities and DSSABs pay for this.

For example, even though the previous government promised a 50-50 cost-sharing of ambulance services, this is not happening. DSSABs in our part of the province are now paying between 60% and 65% of the costs of ambulance services, and this is primarily due to the refusal of the past government and the current government to pay more than 1% toward the cost of salary increases of paramedics.

The second problem that the government is doing nothing about: A number of jurisdictions are refusing to pay the costs associated with interjurisdictional or cross-boundary emergency services. The provincial legislation does allow neighbouring jurisdictions to charge one another for emergency services. There is a formula in place to calculate those bills, but many jurisdictions aren't paying the bills because they don't agree with the formula, or worse, they don't agree with the reliability of the Ministry of Health data used to calculate the bill.

So the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB estimates that it's now owed \$1.5 million for ambulance services that it has been unable to collect from other jurisdictions where they have provided a service. And the Ministry of Health is doing nothing—nothing—to respond to that problem.

The third problem has to do with different regulations and different funding related to townships without official municipal organization. Even though the funding formula for townships without official municipal organization is very clearly spelled out in the Ambulance Act, it is very clear that the ministry is allowing for discrepancies to occur between those regulations and other regulations, even though the regulations in the Ambulance Act and the regulations spelled out with respect to TWOMOs are exactly the same. The huge problem we have is that because the Ministry of Health has a different interpretation between these two acts, even though the regulations are virtually the same, there is a huge discrepancy in funding, and that very seriously and negatively impacts a number of small rural municipalities and municipalities that don't have official municipal organization when it comes to finding the funds necessary to pay for EMS service.

What is most interesting is that this discrepancy occurred under the former government and this discrepancy occurs under the current government, and it occurs even though this Liberal government set up an interministerial DSSAB working group to look at this issue and others. What's interesting, as I hear the government give its rhetoric tonight about consultation, is that even though this government established the interministerial DSSAB working group, it hasn't convened a meeting of that working group in 11 months. I hear the government talk about consultation and the need to work with municipalities because they are on the front line delivering service. Here we have district social service admin boards, which are on the front line, delivering service in small municipalities and in areas that don't have municipal structures, and yet for the last 11 months the government hasn't convened a meeting at all to meet with them to discuss serious issues of downloading and other financial discrepancies that really need to be resolved.

2020

It's nice that you're talking to AMO. Maybe you should start to talk to some of the other structures, other municipal/unorganized structures and organizations out there who deliver a service, especially when your government was the one that set up the working group and your government is the one that hasn't called a meeting of this same working group for the past 11 months—11 months. So much for consultation and so much for trying to resolve some really serious issues facing these groups.

In conclusion, let me just say that I hear the government talk about consultation. My municipality is a whole lot more worried about the pressing issue of financial resources to deal with the services it's trying to deliver to residents in the municipality, and the DSSAB is far more concerned about getting some money for ambulance services, for example, and actually having a meeting after 11 months to consult with the government on this and other important issues.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased this evening to have a opportunity to respond to some of the comments made with respect to Bill 92, an Act to amend the Municipal Act, 2001. I think it is fairly straightforward, and hopefully both the opposition parties will be supporting this legislation, which calls for a consultative process with our local municipalities across the province of Ontario. I want to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs for his leadership on this bill. This is fairly straightforward.

In the past number of years our municipalities have not had the respect that they deserve. We had a government that took over local school boards and downloaded services to our municipalities that were certainly—

Mr. Leal: Did Al Leach ever consult with you?

Mr. Orazietti: I can't recall that happening.

The downloading of services that took place was certainly not revenue neutral. We were told that it was.

As a councillor before arriving here, I can certainly tell you that our community struggled a great deal during budget time as a result of the downloading of these services.

With respect to the Ontario municipal partnership fund that was recently announced, our mayor was quoted as saying, "This is amazingly great news, and it will make a substantive difference for our upcoming budget." Having spoken to the councillors in Sault Ste. Marie and our mayor, I think our municipality is appreciative of the steps our government has taken to renew its partnership with municipalities across the province. Certainly they're feeling that in our community as well.

I encourage members of the House to support this particular piece of legislation. I think it's something that will stand the test of time. It's very symbolic as well, because it will say to future governments that the consultation with our municipalities is essential and very important in terms of hammering out transfer payments to our municipalities.

Mr. Barrett: I appreciated the comments from the member from Nickel Belt and her description of the principles and examples of consultation and citizen participation. The NDP government, with respect to the municipalities in our area—at that time it was the Haldimand-Norfolk region—brought in the Barnes report, which called for a diminution of duplication in municipal services and set the stage for the de-amalgamation, if you will, of the Haldimand-Norfolk region.

There are so many municipalities—I think of Chatham-Kent, Kawartha Lakes, Hamilton—that are calling on this government to consult. There are citizens there who truly wish to participate with this particular government. Speaker, I recall that both you and I presented at the Rockton fair last year, with VOCO, the Voices of Central Ontario, at a conference they held. I regret to report that there was not a Liberal MPP there to present to that audience.

The legislation says, "The province of Ontario endorses the principle of ongoing consultation between the province and the municipalities...." I pose the question, are we taking this legislation out for a full set of public hearings? I do not think there are any representatives of municipalities in the Legislative Assembly this evening. Are we going to have hearings in Hamilton, in Glanbrook or Flamborough, for example? Will we have hearings in Chatham? Will we have hearings in Kawartha Lakes or perhaps in Ottawa and Sudbury and other areas that have been amalgamated in recent years?

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm taking this opportunity to have my two minutes because I know that the Liberals and Tories might be so eager to continue this debate that I may not get an opportunity to congratulate the member for the great 20 minutes she delivered in this place exposing the emptiness of this bill. Quite frankly, it's bland, innocuous, vacuous and anodyne. It's just an empty, empty bill. Of course it will withstand the test of time. There's nothing in it—zip, rien, nihi, nada, niente. What does it do for any municipi-

ality looking for the pecunia that has been taken away by the Conservatives and promised by the Liberals? Nihil, nada, niente.

There's nothing to be proud of when you say, "This bill continues with our desire to consult." My friend from Nickel Belt already pointed out a number of circumstances where this government is not consulting. Besides, the government doesn't need a bill to consult with anybody. You don't need a memorandum to say, "I'm going to consult with AMO and/or Toronto or any other city that decides not to be part of AMO." You understand what I'm saying.

Why are we dealing with this bill when we've got the Heritage Act, which the Minister of Culture, who's close to me, said is one of the most important things that has ever been introduced in this Legislature? It hasn't been introduced here for third reading but it's the most important bill ever. Buildings are being torn asunder as we speak, but the minister has yet to reintroduce this bill, and we're discussing this memorandum that is empty and has got nothing. I just don't understand the priorities of this government. I wanted to thank Shelley Martel for exposing the emptiness of the bill.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Je trouve très curieux que ce soir on est porté à critiquer un gouvernement qui veut ouvrir la porte à toutes les municipalités afin de consulter davantage. Je dois dire que l'on devrait féliciter le ministre responsable des Affaires municipales de l'Ontario. De son initiative, cette loi nous démontre encore une fois que le gouvernement McGuinty veut consulter et veut impliquer les municipalités avant de prendre des décisions puisque c'est le gouvernement le plus près de la population.

La députée de Nickel Belt a mentionné que le Grand Sudbury n'est pas satisfait de la position prise par notre gouvernement McGuinty lors de l'annonce jeudi dernier concernant le nouveau fonds pour les municipalités de l'Ontario. Elle a référé au CRF, et aujourd'hui on est porté à critiquer après avoir reçu un montant substantiel pour la taxe de gasoline. On oublie ce qu'on a reçu. On a toujours dit qu'on voulait répondre aux besoins des petites municipalités. Je peux dire que lors de la réunion de ROMA-Good Roads, comme on l'appelle en anglais, nous avons rencontré le caucus des présidents de comtés de l'est, et ils nous ont fait une demande. Ils nous ont dit que cela leur prenait 12 \$ millions pour boucler leur budget et ils en ont reçu dans l'ordre de 16 \$ millions.

Les municipalités de Glengarry, Prescott et Russell vont bénéficier d'un surplus d'au-delà de 6 \$ millions avec cette annonce. Je crois que l'on devrait dire : « Maintenant nous avons un gouvernement qui reconnaît les besoins des municipalités rurales. Il n'y a pas que les municipalités du secteur urbain qui ont besoin de fonds financiers. Les autres aussi ont besoin d'aide gouvernementale. »

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt now has two minutes in which to respond.

M^{me} Martel: Je voudrais dire à M. Lalonde que les petites municipalités ne peuvent pas recevoir de fonds à

propos du gas tax parce qu'elles n'ont pas de transports publics. Dans n'importe quelle petite communauté au nord de l'Ontario, les municipalités n'ont pas de transports publics, alors elles ne peuvent pas recevoir de fonds de la part du gouvernement. Moi, je voudrais parler à propos des fonds pour les ambulances, par exemple.

2030

I want to talk about those communities that could get and need money for ambulances. A lot of the small communities in northern Ontario don't have a public transit system, so they can't get the gas tax money and they never did get the gas tax money—so many small communities in northern Ontario and other small rural municipalities. The government in my part of the world could do something important, for example, with respect to ambulances. As I said in my remarks, we have a number of small communities run by district social services administration boards that are having a terrible time paying for ambulance service, because the previous government and this government decreased the share they're paying for ambulance services, because there has been no resolution to the problem of interjurisdictional billing and because the government has two different funding situations for municipalities without municipal organizations and those with municipal organizations.

This issue might be resolved if the government would only actually consult with the DSSABs about this serious issue, but 11 months ago the government established a working group between itself and the DSSABs, and in the last 11 months the group hasn't met once. So much for consultation. You might be consulting with AMO, but you're not talking at all to other municipal structures who have to deliver services too, DSSABs included.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's certainly my pleasure to rise in support of Bill 92. I would like to start off by quoting the past president of AMO: "This historic bill would enshrine in legislation the principle of meaningful and informed consultation between the province and Ontario's municipal government," said Ann Mulvale.... "This would help minimize or prevent unintended consequences for the one taxpayer. This legislation is good news for the public and is a significant illustration of how governments should work together."

I would like to add to what the member from Durham stated, as I'm a member of the same standing committee as that member is. Roger Anderson, during the consultation on the pre-budget hearings, certainly drew to our attention the importance to AMO for Bill 92 to move forward. Not only do we have an endorsement from the past president of AMO, we also have an endorsement from the current president of AMO, Roger Anderson.

I start off in this manner because I believe that AMO, as we in this House all know, represents the municipalities of Ontario, and the voices they bring to the table are so important in providing the services that people expect within Ontario.

I also want to add that I will be sharing my time with the member from Perth-Middlesex and the member from

St. Catharines. We in the government are so anxious to talk about Bill 92, to say how important this legislation is, that members are coming from the floor to raise their voices in support of this. It's just so heartening to hear that kind of support.

When I hear from the members of the opposition the numerous concerns—you know, consult on this or that, or that they feel that the government erred in some manner—I think it's very important that we don't lose sight of what Bill 92 is about. It is about enshrining in legislation the consultation process between the municipalities and the provincial government. I know from the questions that are asked in this House on a daily basis that this bill will be supported unanimously. I know that members would not say one thing and then vote in another manner, because I know when they talk that it's very important.

Mr. Baird: Don't go there.

Mrs. Mitchell: I can hear the support from the member from Nepean-Carleton, and I thank him for that support. Clearly, he will be supporting Bill 92. That's what I've heard tonight.

Many of us, as you do yourself, Mr. Speaker, come from a municipal background. I was in municipal government during the non-consultation process that happened with the previous government.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very supportive of this bill, and would like to see if there would be unanimous consent to have the vote on second reading right now.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mrs. Mitchell: I am so surprised that the third party is not prepared to support unanimous consent. I hear the level of support in this House. We stand up and say, "Consultation is the way we should be going, and we need to do more of it," talking about the municipalities and the services they provide. But then, given a bit of opportunity to pass this bill, it doesn't happen. I say to the third party that I'm shocked, absolutely shocked. But as we can, I think it's important that we move forward and talk about how important Bill 92 is.

As I was saying before the member from Nepean-Carleton stood up and strongly endorsed Bill 92, one of the things that happened while I was in municipal government was what we fondly referred to as downloading. There was just no consultation. Rural municipalities, urban municipalities, small: the mantra was "rightsizing, downsizing, downloading." It was to be revenue neutral. It started with the synopsis that it would all be revenue neutral.

When we talk about building a foundation of trust and mutual respect, this is what Bill 92 does. It enshrines the respect that we show to local governments. As there's only one taxpayer, we must work much more efficiently with our limited tax dollars. By working together, we will do that. We will bring forward to the people of Ontario the services they need to get about their day-to-day business.

I know there's such enthusiasm from the government to talk about Bill 92. We recognize how important this legislation is. Once again, I would just like to reinforce how strongly in support I am of Bill 92 and give the member from Perth-Middlesex an adequate amount of time so that he too, I'm sure, will lend his support as well.

Thank you very much for allowing me the time. The people of Huron-Bruce look forward to this piece of legislation moving forward.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I must begin by saying how much I appreciate the awfully generous comments of my colleague the member from Huron-Bruce. Mrs. Mitchell is a wonderful colleague. Our ridings about each other and we deal with many issues in common, including municipalities.

Though I'm firmly in support of Bill 92, I have a slightly different take on it, because I don't come to this place with municipal experience. I know you have that, Mr. Speaker, and many of the members here. The member from Peterborough is a good example, and the member from the Soo also has municipal experience, and of course the member from Northumberland is the former mayor of Brighton. I'm sure you've seen his car. His licence plate says "Brighton." There isn't anybody in Ontario now who doesn't know that the member is the former mayor of Brighton, because that's the municipal world.

2040

To follow up on what the member from Huron-Bruce said about respect, respect costs nothing, but it's priceless. That's what Bill 92 is all about. People say, "Why do you have to do it?" Well, I ask this question: Could you imagine, after this government announced that we were going to have Bill 92, if we listened to the siren call of the opposition trying to convince us that perhaps we should change our mind, that Bill 92 is not important and that somehow we shouldn't pass it? They'd be like a pack of wolves on this government saying that somehow we had changed our mind. Perhaps they were trying to lull us into a sense that maybe we shouldn't move forward with Bill 92, that perhaps in June when the House rises, somehow this bill is lost.

Well, after listening to John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and speaking to my other neighbour, the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Maria Van Bommel, who is Minister Gerretsen's parliamentary assistant for rural affairs, I can assure you, after listening to their impassioned oratory in this House this evening on this bill, that there is no way we are going to waver in our commitment to Bill 92.

Bill 92 is important, because we have said to our municipal brethren, to our partners—the word "partner" is something I'm used to because I've had many partners in my business career—how very, very important this is. It's not enough just to say that there's a new day. We have to have some assurance—

Mr. Baird: What about in Muskoka?

Mr. Wilkinson: Muskoka was in our campaign document. Perhaps you had a chance to take a look at it; it's quite lengthy.

We ended up with a difference. We had to have a situation with our municipal partners where we would turn a new page, and what Bill 92 does is turn a new page. It says to other governments in the future—our own and others—that if you don't feel you should be consulting with another level of government, a level of government that deserves our respect and was voted in by the same people who voted all of us in, if you want to show disrespect to the voters, to those people who exercise their franchise, and if you want to show disrespect to municipalities, then just don't renew the memorandum of understanding. Just pass a law and say, "No, legally we don't have to consult with you."

My God, there'd be war in this province. I remember the last time we had a war with municipalities. It was the previous government in that revenue-neutral exercise that was really all a bunch of spin to show that they were going to download soft costs on to hard municipal property. This province has had to struggle with that ever since. That's why we need to turn the page.

I think about, for example, the announcement I made in my riding, as all the members did, about the fire training grant. What a wonderful change that is. I want to share with the members, who know this, but also with the people tuning in tonight that the simplistic way of handing out money in this province is just per capita: It's how many people are in your community and how much you are going to get per capita and just send it out. That's been happening I don't know how many times in this province. But I'll tell you, the Ontario fire training grant turns that principle on its head, because the smaller the municipality—and I have many in my riding—the more difficult it is to provide fair, safe and equitable distribution of assets to ensure that the people in rural Ontario have the same right to high-quality training and equipment provided to those most valuable of volunteers and professionals who come to our houses and our businesses and who attend car accidents when we need them to show up. They're the most brave of public servants. We're public servants, but we're not nearly as brave as paramedics and firefighters and police officers—not the people who run away but the people who go.

I know that in all the communities in my riding how very, very happy they were that the smaller the community, the larger the amount of money they received per capita. That's where the problem is. With a very small tax base, they needed the provincial government to come. Should the fire department in Goderich, in Newbury, in Mitchell or in Norwood also have thermal imaging equipment or should it just be the fire departments in Kitchener and London and Toronto? No. The good people in Norwood, the good people in Mitchell, the good people in Newbury also need to have that protection. They pay their taxes as well. Our ability to do that is based on the fact that we listened and consulted with our municipal partners, who told us how very, very

important it was when it came to the protection of citizens that we look to this and have a new way of distributing money other than this simple per capita basis, which continued to have an imbalance as to the equitable distribution of assets.

When I first came into office 17 months ago, I met with all my municipalities—the city of Stratford and the independent town of St. Marys and the townships of North Perth, West Perth, Perth East and Perth South, and also in Middlesex and Lucan Biddulph. Then there is the great community of North Middlesex, which I share with the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and also the communities of Thames Centre and Middlesex Centre, which I share with the Minister of Agriculture and Food, who is the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London. I went to them and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, it’s a new day. Our government has been elected, and we will respect you.” Do you know what they said to me? “Mr. Wilkinson, with all due respect, you’re a rookie. We heard that from the other bunch of bums and we don’t believe you. Actions speak louder than words. We’ll reserve judgment until you’ve had a chance to prove to us that you actually are going to be a partner with us, your colleagues at the municipal level.” I can proudly announce that now, 17 months later, all my municipal partners, all the colleagues I deal with on a day-in, day-out basis, feel that we really have turned the page.

Bill 92 is crucial to this government; it’s the reason we’ve introduced it. It’s crucial that we are able to show demonstrably to all the people of Ontario the need to consult, the need to turn the page and assure our municipal partners that we will never download services to them again without the ability to talk and get the best advice possible on municipal issues. And where do we get that advice? From municipalities. That’s where that advice is.

I’m sure the dean of this Legislature, the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the Honourable Jim Bradley, the member from St. Catharines, would want to weigh in on this debate and share with all of us, with his vast amount of experience in this House, his thoughts about Bill 92.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): All the consultation that’s going on is important. I have not seen a minister do as much consultation as the Minister of Municipal Affairs did over the greenbelt legislation, meeting in community after community. I keep hearing questions coming from the official opposition about this, but I notice that the new leader, John Tory, doesn’t ask the questions. In downtown Toronto, with the environmentalists—the Pollution Probe dinner and so on—he wants to be an environmentalist, but when he gets out into the hinterlands he wants to be one of the folks as well, so instead he gets some of the other members to get up and ask the questions because he doesn’t want people to know that he’s either for or against the greenbelt.

I remember when he used to go to the meetings of Pollution Probe and he was always one of the great

supporters of environmental issues. But now they have to raise some money over there—\$2.5 million they have raised. That’s a consultation too. You’d be interested in this, Mr. Speaker. There’s a consultation going on, I think tomorrow night, at the Bayview Golf and Country Club. If you want to meet John Tory, you pay a thousand bucks a shot at the Bayview Golf and Country Club. I’m not advertising for it, because it says “by invitation only” so you can talk to John personally. One of the co-signers of it is the owner of a development company. I wish I had the letter in front of me now—I don’t; this is just a piece of paper—but Peter somebody, a developer. There’s another famous name on there, a wonderful family, no doubt, throughout the greater Toronto area called DeGasperis. There is a Mr. DeGasperis—and that’s quite all right—who is inviting people to this exclusive, \$1,000-a-shot meeting with John Tory.

What I notice, and you may have noticed this because you are an astute observer of this House, Mr. Speaker, is that after they have a fundraiser over there, we get certain kinds of questions coming up in the House. Now, I don’t want to draw any conclusions that the people who went to the fundraiser encouraged the Conservative Party to ask the questions, because that would be drawing a conclusion that I can’t really draw at this point in time, but there is circumstantial evidence, may I say, at the very least. I remember in Britain—and I’m not saying this is happening here, because I’d never want to say that—they actually had people who were paying opposition members to ask questions. I don’t think that would happen here.

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I will be curious when that consultation takes place at the Bayview Country Club between John Tory and those who have 1,000 bucks apiece. I hope the media are waiting outside to see who is going in. I don’t think they will be, but I hope they would be there to see who’s going in and out of this.

After that, I would be very interested to see what kind of questions we hear in the House. I don’t want my suspicions to be confirmed; I hope they’re not. I know the new Leader of the Opposition, whom we all wished well the other day, is not going to ask these questions, but I’ll be watching other members of the caucus to see who’s asking the questions on behalf of those whose development and paving interests are adversely impacted by the greenbelt.

There’s room for lots of debate on the issue; I understand that. There are people who legitimately may put forth their viewpoints. But I’ll really be curious to see if that \$1,000-a-head shindig at the Bayview Country Club, where you get to speak intimately with John Tory, doesn’t produce some rather interesting developments in this House; maybe even some questions that will be forthcoming at that time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. O’Toole: I think very few of the remarks of the member from St. Catharines had anything to do with Bill 92, but to put his mind at rest or at ease, I would suggest

that the best list he could get is the \$10,000-a-plate secret invitation at the mansion of the Sorbara family. That's the \$10,000 list. It's one example of the consultation—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: For the record, it's important here, since the member for St. Catharines brought this up, and I'm going to quote. The member from Peterborough may want to pay attention. This is with respect to the lack of consultation on the Greenbelt Task Force, on the mapping of the boundaries:

"The man who led the task force"—on the mapping—"that created the greenbelt system says he's happy...."

"But Burlington Mayor Rob MacIsaac says his group had nothing to do with drawing the actual boundaries of the zone that stretches from Niagara to Rice Lake."

I'm going to quote here from the Peterborough Examiner of January 24:

"Rosen said the province is making decisions without properly consulting with local governments that depend on Queen's Park's assistance.

"There has been a general lack of consultation from the province," he said. "The province has said it wants us as an equal partner, yet it has made a decision to flatline the CRF"—the community reinvestment fund—"and tell us how we're spending gas tax money. They're putting us in a real difficult position without a lot of consultation."

That's from Kingston mayor Harvey Rosen, and that's in the Peterborough Examiner. So you had best look to where you're pointing before you ask.

I believe it's important for John Tory and all leaders to consult, but secret \$10,000 consultations on the most enormous land grab deal in the province's history were held at a mansion in York region. Some of the names on that list may indeed be on our list, but at least ours is a public process and it's real consultation.

Mr. Marchese: Because I may not have an opportunity tonight—I know the Conservatives are so eager to speak to this bill—I'm going to use my two minutes to make a couple of points. I simply say to the member from St. Catharines—and I'm sure it was an oversight—that there was a little dinner held by one well-known Liberal just a mere short while ago, and it was a tête-à-tête kind of dinner, a very small, exclusive group, and all you had to do was put out 10,000 bucks for that wonderful tête-à-tête avec le premier ministre. I'm sure you forgot it, Jimmy, but I wanted to raise it for the record and help you out in case the memory had failed a touch.

The member from Perth-Middlesex says this bill is so crucial that perhaps it skipped his mind, because it's hard in this place to keep it all together, that the Frost Centre was shut down a year or so ago; no consultation with me as a critic of culture, no consultation with anybody I am aware of. But the Frost Centre is not such a big deal. It's an outdoor education centre, a mere little thing that we could just send by the wayside. I understand that, but I'm sure it's an oversight.

The other issue has to do with the city of Kawartha Lakes. You will recall that when they were in opposition they said that, if there were a vote in the area of the city of Kawartha Lakes to de-amalgamate, they would honour that. They had a vote through a referendum to de-amalgamate. What did the Liberals do? They didn't listen.

Just recently, they took Muskoka out of the north. Did they consult you as the municipal critic? I don't think they did. Did they consult anybody? I don't think they did.

This bill is a sham. It's empty, worthless, meaningless. It has no effect or power and it means nothing to anybody.

Mr. Leal: I listened carefully to my colleagues the members from St. Catharines, Huron-Bruce and Perth-Middlesex. When I was in the riding on the weekend, I talked to my good friend the reeve of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen, Ron Gerow. Under that government, Ron Gerow got zero under CRF. Havelock-Belmont-Methuen has one of the lowest assessment bases in the province of Ontario. What did he say to me on Saturday? "Jeff, thank God you've changed the funding formula because I'm getting \$352,000 to pay for the services in my community."

Look at the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock in the northwest corner of Peterborough county. Galway-Cavendish-Harvey got zero under that government. I talked to Tom Flynn, the reeve. For the first time, \$400,000 in funds to help with their services.

I go back to 1999. Al Leach was the author of the who-got-done-in committee. Who got done in? The municipalities. By enshrining the memorandum of understanding in Bill 92, we are putting in place that this memorandum of understanding, which started to evolve through consultations last August when AMO put forward a committee to negotiate, when the government of Ontario put forward a committee to negotiate—last Thursday we heard the results of their deliberations. We got a funding formula that is fair for municipalities right across the province. It is now a formula that is transparent.

If you ask the association of clerks and treasurers in the province of Ontario, they will tell you that none of them could understand the old CRF formula. It didn't make sense. We now have a new funding formula that's transparent, that's going to assist municipalities right across this province. I say, it's about time a government brought forward this kind of legislation.

Mr. Baird: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Roger Anderson and Tim Hudak want this bill passed, so I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I want to take a couple of minutes to talk about why the bill is here in the first place. Let's be mindful of the fact that when the municipalities were downloaded to, David Crombie came back with a Who Does What recommendation that said

hard costs should go to the municipalities and soft costs should go to the province because of the nature of soft costs, which can fluctuate in times of duress, in times of a drop in the economy. It would be a little bit easier, apparently, according to what David Crombie and his crew came up with, for the province to deal with that.

Let's talk about the neutrality. The one point I remember when I was in opposition was that they had to come up with \$200,000 to make up the difference of that exercise that said they were going to have a balance or equal amount of money on both sides and the download would be revenue neutral. They just simply, out of the air, picked ambulance services. That's exactly what they said. "The numbers fit, so let's download ambulance."

There was a good thing that came as a result of that. In terms of delivery, it makes sense that ambulance is done on a local level because of its subsidiarity, that where you have the easiest, most effective way to provide that service it should be given to them, and that the harder way goes to the province.

So why do we have this bill before us? To ensure that from here on in—and listen carefully—unless another government at another time later in the future decides not to consult with the municipalities, we will now have this enshrined. It may be classified as a simple "nothing" bill, but ask the municipal politicians whether or not they believe that enshrining consultation is a bad idea. I know what the answer is; you know what the answer is. Let's pass the bill and get on with it.

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The Acting Speaker: Two minutes for reply.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I appreciate all the comments that were made, particularly by the members on this side of the House, but all the comments. I want to say to my friend from downtown Toronto and the NDP whether he is aware that Eleanor Clitheroe, the former head of Hydro One, gave \$5,000 to the New Democratic Party. In 1995: \$5,000 to that party. That is something a lot of people don't know and I thought they might want to know.

I was happy there was mention of the firefighting money. For the first time, a government provided money to municipalities for firefighting purposes, and I talked to several firefighters in my community who were absolutely delighted with that.

I was talking about this consultation and my friend from Durham got up to speak about invitations and so on. Perhaps he didn't get an invitation to the \$1,000-a-person gathering at the Bayview Golf and Country Club, tomorrow night I think it is, with John Tory. There's going to be money coming in from all kinds of the rich and the privileged. You see, when he makes reference to any fundraising on the other side, the people are angry because they did not get what they wanted, but we can be sure that the rich and the privileged will do very well, thank you, under John Tory.

I notice that there's no heckling allowed by John Tory from the Conservative members of the House. I read it in Ian Urquhart's column. They're back heckling again. What has happened with the questions and the debates in

this House is that John Tory at the convention may have got the most votes, but Jim Flaherty won the last leadership convention. We can see that in the Tory policies.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Trinity-Spadina is very anxious to comment on this bill, and I hope that, with the indulgence of the government, there will be time given to him at the appropriate time. All of us here, I believe, want to move forward, as has been explained, with this feel-good bill. I should explain for the viewers that this is the bill. You wouldn't want to spend a lot of time here because it's pretty much a commitment to thin air.

I could read the explanatory note, just for some context, because I have time to fill. "The bill provides that the province shall consult with the municipalities on matters of mutual interest in accordance with a memorandum of understanding entered into between the province and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario." In fact, that is the current status that expired under Ann Mulvale, when she was president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and I believe that at that time it was Chris Hodgson who signed that agreement. There were consultations, and I could go on at length that there were indeed plenty of consultations.

Many members here, as I said earlier in my remarks, were part of municipal levels of government and as such would be familiar with some of the references to history that I will try to recall off the top of my head. I served as the chair of finance for the municipality of Clarington, and I enjoyed it. I would thank Marie Marano, the treasurer at the time, for teaching me a lot about municipal tax rates, transition factors, mill rates and assessment bases, and how there was inconsistency across the province, how they had to have assessment adjustment factors to calculate the relationship of the province in terms of the transfer of funds between the province and the municipal jurisdictions.

Those funds had different names. In the old days they were called conditional grants and unconditional grants. But there was a schedule of relationships, and those occurred primarily at the staff level, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, as the previous mayor of East York—the last mayor, I might say, and probably the best mayor, or the last best mayor, of East York. I know Dave Johnson was also a highly regarded mayor there who at one time certainly had a large role here.

The history that I want to go back to a little bit started basically at the tail end of the David Peterson government. The David Peterson government initiated a paper, and I think it was called the disentanglement report, if I'm not wrong. They were trying to disentangle—that just means "sort out"—what sources of revenue, whether property tax, sales tax or income tax, would go to what level of government to pay for which services.

You could say that the current debate in Ottawa, at the federal level, with the provinces is that they are dealing with the transfer payments under the same discussion,

really. You might think of the Canada Health Act as a perfect example to understand the context of what I'm talking about. The federal government signed a relationship, a memorandum, under the Canada Health Act with the provinces. In that memorandum it was a 50-50 agreement: The feds would pay 50% and the provinces would pay 50%. But there again, the federal government sets the standards of service, what they call medically necessary treatments. Those medically necessary treatments cannot be delisted as services being provided in any other way by the provinces.

Alberta's relationship would be a good example. They tried to delist some services in their negotiations with the medical community so that the doctors could then pass those charges on through private health care. Ontario has done the same in its relationship with the doctors. In fact, in your last budget, the Liberal budget under Greg Sorbara, you delisted chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services. Those delisted services in fact really became private services. In other words, the funding would come into the system through the user-pay system. So it's not unique—not unique to you, not unique to us.

The broader history of this disentanglement, which was the first attempt—and Mr. Prue would remember, as I do, being a municipal councillor during the Bob Rae government, and Mr. Leal would as well, that they had what they called the Fair Tax Commission. The Fair Tax Commission—and I did attend meetings—was a very broad and considered attempt to deal with the haemorrhaging of fixed expenditures, basically payroll, and a shortage of revenue. With a bad economy in the time of the NDP government, it was no fault of theirs. They aren't responsible for fiscal policy; it's the federal regime really. And even there, Canada's overall contribution in the general scheme of world economics is kind of minuscule, actually. We're very much dependent on the US economy. So even their fiscal policy on tax and monetary control is somewhat out of their control as well.

For instance, let's say the economy drops three points, as it did during the NDP government. On an annualized basis, three points amounts to about a \$3-billion loss in revenue.

Interjection: It's more than that.

Mr. O'Toole: No, no. Every point of loss in the GDP represents about \$700 million in real revenue. You are going to experience that in your upcoming budget at the end of this month. But the point I'm really making is even more complex, because when your revenue goes down, your expenditures on social programs go up, i.e., welfare, EI costs and other assistance for persons who have been disenfranchised from the workforce and need help. So social spending goes up as your economy goes down.

I'll try to make those relationships throughout my presentation, because our attempt—and the Fair Tax Commission was to do the same thing. They tried to isolate what revenue paid for what service. It was a valiant attempt, because it was preceded by what I remember as the local services realignment. That's what it

was called. That was the bill, the consultation paper, that Mr. Marchese and his government had prior to the social contract. They tried to recognize—listen, viewers, your councils are now dealing with their budget. Some 80% of the municipal budget is wages and benefits—potentially more. One of the most volatile areas is public safety and emergency response. The highest-cost, most vulnerable area is policing, fire and ambulance. Those are the three really serious cost drivers for the municipalities. The capital portion of the budget is actually one of the smaller portions.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: No. As a previous mayor, I'm surprised how little you bring to the conversation, so I won't acknowledge that.

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My point is this, and I am trying to make a substantive contribution here: I believe that what we had developed—and some may disagree with it. In fact, I think it was an ongoing dialogue. I would say to you that it's not true what has just been said. It's not true that they disagreed, and I will show you evidence to the contrary.

What we ended up with was trying to pull ourselves out of the Fair Tax Commission and the social contract with the election in 1995. Remember that in the social contract, they actually cut people's pay. They opened contracts, ripped them up and cut people's pay. What did I tell you? The pay is 80% of their budgets. So what the heck is wrong with municipal spending? It's the payroll issue. What is wrong with the provincial government? It's payroll. It's payroll and benefits, and they're going through the roof.

If anyone has been paying attention recently to financial reports in the private sector, a good example would be my previous employer, General Motors. General Motors has serious demands. In fact, there was an article in the paper today that some of the pension funds are experiencing as much as a 15% annualized increase in the cost of benefits for retired people. These are not sustainable when you have a shrinking workforce. I'm getting a small bit off topic, but the whole thing here for everyone, including the Minister of Energy—he should well know that over half the Ontario Hydro employees are making over \$100,000. They are not inventing nuclear engineering or high-voltage transmission; they are actually administering a highly regulated market.

I think there are some reasons for competition within all sectors, to say what is the value on a go-forward basis to the taxpayer, who at the end of the day is paying for all this. This isn't like selling cars or computers; this is the public service. They are valued, they are important and they are essential to the extent that they must continue even through economic difficulties.

The government's revenue is tied to the economy. The fundamental premise for the Harris-Eves government, if you will, is that without a strong economy you have no quality of life. And if you want to look for proof of that throughout the world, look at countries that have a weakened economy. Look at countries, like Afghanistan,

that have no economy. They have no monetary system, no legal system, no educational system to speak of, and people's quality of life is adversely affected.

It's important to understand which came first, the chicken or the egg, and in this case the economy or the standard of living. As we know, tax policy, and capital tax specifically, is very important to the vitality of an economy and to the quality of life. They are inextricably linked. They are linked federally, provincially and municipally.

We have a history here that all governments over the past 15 years have struggled to develop a relationship—call it a memorandum of understanding, call it Bill 92—and I endorse the principle that we should be consulting on major shifts in relationships as to who pays for what. After all, there's only one taxpayer.

You should also know that Ontario, in a municipal sense, is the highest contributor to municipal expenditures in Canada. Of all the provinces, the municipal portion of the tax burden is greater in Ontario than in any other province in Canada. It's important to understand, first of all, that since the Liberal government, the NDP government and the Conservative government, we have been shifting responsibilities. Some would call it delisting; some would call it downloading.

I want to respond to a comment that was made a bit earlier. This is a research document. It's part of an ongoing discussion user guide issued in 1999. All the municipal clerks and treasurers have a copy of this guide. I attended a workshop. I hope, Lou—at that time you weren't elected—that you did attend, because I believe you were the mayor of Cobourg and, as such, you should have. If you didn't, you should attend one of the sessions about the local services realignment. What was your municipality?

Mr. Rinaldi: Brighton.

Mr. O'Toole: Pardon me. I apologize, Lou. I did meet when you were the mayor.

All I'm saying here is that this significant user guide was worked with municipal staff—clerks and treasurers—to develop a relationship.

I should tell you that if we had taken the intent of the initial consultation under the Who Does What committee—and the Fair Tax Commission, I might say—the major recommendation, Mr. Levac, was that we would take education funding off the property tax base. That was in the Fair Tax Commission, it was in the Royal Commission on Learning and it was also in the Who Does What committee. But when we looked at how much we were transferring to the municipalities at that time and the cost of education, the two numbers didn't match. We could not have taken all of education, which was about \$8 billion, off the municipal tax base because there were not enough equal things to transfer down, and the amount of tax room would have accrued to the municipality, which means we would have been paying more. We would have had to raise taxes, and they, theoretically, should have lowered them, but that tax room just may

have been crowded out by more expenditures. Mr. Leal from Peterborough would probably know that.

It's a complicated relationship, but what we ended up with—this was a dialogue occurring from 1997, which was when we started the responsibility of transfers under local services realignment—that's where this acronym LSR comes in. The responsibilities we dealt with were pretty important expenditure programs: general welfare, family benefits, daycare services, long-term care, home care, women's shelters, social housing, municipal transit, GO Transit, municipal ferries, municipal airports, sewer and water, policing, real property assessment—called MPAC—public health, land ambulance, roads, provincial offences, and residential education property tax.

All municipal councils would remember that historically the argument at the municipal level was that the darned school boards would keep raising taxes, which the municipalities had to collect.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Weren't you on the school board?

Mr. O'Toole: Yes, I was, and I was chair of finance as well. But the fact is that legislatively the school boards came under the municipality for tax collection purposes. So the lower-tier level of government—in my case, Clarington; in Peterborough, Peterborough would be the lower tier as well—the school board, of which I was a member, would hand in that tax rate, and the municipality would send the tax bill to the house, and they'd say, "That darned city of Peterborough." The municipality itself was probably flatlining its budget, whereas the school board was going for 6% or 7%, and technically, the homeowner knew no difference. He couldn't sort this out on the tax bill.

I think it is important, as I said earlier, that two levels of government did try to sort out who paid for education. This has always been my standard argument on that: Education is a public right, and, as such, it should not be dependent on the wealth of the assessment base to pay for it.

What we had—and Mr. Levac, as a high school principal, would know—was that many jurisdictions throughout Ontario had—without any political bias here, because I was in one of the poorest-funded boards in Ontario, yet we were trying to provide and teach to the same standards of curriculum, outcomes and expectations for our youth as larger cities that had a wealthy tax base. What it used to be referred to as in inner circles was the "non-residential tax base." That is code language for all the commercial-industrial tax.

Good examples in the city of Toronto would be the Hummingbird Centre, SkyDome, the Gardens: all these commercial entities that pay huge taxes—millions of dollars—but don't produce students. If you only have a residential tax base—and about 89% of our tax base was residential—those residential taxpayers actually send kids to school. It's not like SkyDome, which pays \$10 million in taxes. They don't send kids to school; they just send the money to the school board.

Large urban centres—Ottawa, Toronto and London—certainly were the major centres that spent more on

education than other jurisdictions: as much as \$8,000 per student in some jurisdictions, versus \$4,000 per student for some jurisdictions. We deemed, and the Royal Commission on Learning deemed, that that was an inappropriate use of access to a publicly funded service, and I agree. The Royal Commission on Learning agreed, the Fair Tax Commission agreed and so did the Who Does What Panel. I told you why we didn't take all the tax base off the residential portion—we left a very small part; I think about 18% of education funding still comes from the municipal tax base—because there simply wasn't enough tax room. When we took education up, we took \$3 billion in education funding back to the province and gave them room in their tax bill so that the bottom line of your tax bill wouldn't change.

Here's what we moved down. Welfare rates in 1997 were going to be 80% by the municipalities and 20%—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: Listen and you'll learn.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: We moved it back up. You've got to listen. This is a story and it demonstrates the ongoing dialogue we had right from 1997.

I'm just going to say here that, for instance, when it came down to provincial offences—provincial offences are traffic tickets, parking tickets—all that revenue used to go to the province. We gave the municipalities all of the revenue from provincial offences. So the more tickets they give out, the more revenue they get.

We also backed off from most of it. We had a relationship of 50-50 on daycare; we went back to 80-20. On welfare we went back to 80-20, the way it was, the way it always was.

The worst services—and one of the more obvious ones probably had to do with the realignment of policing services. Much of rural Ontario did not pay for policing. It was OPP services, which were provincially funded. We assessed policing—

Mr. Rinaldi: Municipalities.

Mr. O'Toole: No; the municipalities were never paying it. It was always paid by large urban centres that had their regional police forces. So they were inadvertently avoiding a cost. I could go down this list. I think this is a very important challenge you have.

I generally support the theme of working together and making sure we understand that all the revenue at the end of the day is tied to a healthy economy, which comes back to tax policy. If you look at tax policy and you think tax cuts are a bad thing, we can demonstrate that the amount of revenue we lost with our tax cuts was \$4 billion and the amount of revenue gained was \$16 billion. Look at the numbers. When we came in, we increased funding in health care from \$17.4 billion to \$27.4 billion. We did that because we were able to influence investment in jobs and reap the benefits from the economy.

You may not endorse that economic theory, but I'll tell you, without the proper tax policy federally, provincially and municipally, the city of Toronto and the city of Vaughan, the biggest argument—the city above Toronto: Vaughan. What were they doing? Vaughan had a lower tax rate for industrial-commercial. All of the industrial-commercial tax base was moving out of Toronto to Vaughan. That's why we tried a uniform assessment policy in the province. You should stick with it. It may not be right, but stick with it. If you can manage uniformity in baseline measurements, let them apply the tax rate. You say it's a uniform measurement. If you want to tax something at one level in Mississauga and at another level in Durham, that's local policy on tax, but the assessment measurement should be uniform across the province.

This is an important debate. This bill does nothing except establish what's already in place. I want it to go to further hearings.

The Acting Speaker: It being nearly 9:30 of the clock, this is an opportunity to adjourn for tonight. We will have questions and comments on the next occasion.

The House adjourned at 2123.

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Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Milloy, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West / London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Eglinton-Lawrence	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (L)
Erie-Lincoln Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Craiton, Kim (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Northumberland	Klees, Frank (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oak Ridges	

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement et du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parkdale–High Park	Kennedy, Hon. / L'hon. Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto–Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Trinity–Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Waterloo–Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Whitby–Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziatti, David (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement		
Scarborough–Rouge River	Curling, Hon. / L'hon. Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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